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A MEMOIR

OF

MICHAEL WILLIAM BALFE.

BY

CHARLES LAMB KENNEY.

WITH PORTRAIT.

LONDON:
TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE STREET, STRAND.
1875.

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A MEMOIR

OF

MICHAEL WILLIAM BALFE.

CHAPTER I.

ON the 15th of May, in the year 1808, the subject of this biographical memorial, Michael William Balfe, came into the world, at No. 10, Pitt Street, Dublin. It is often said that distinguished men derive their intellectual gifts rather from the mother than the father: but Balfe's mother, whose maiden name was Ryan, seems to have been no otherwise remarkable than for the beauty of her person, which is said to have been of the most striking kind; and if the future popular composer owed anything to his parentage, the debt must be written down to his father, who was a good violinist, and what perhaps is more to the point, a passionate lover of the

musical art. Discovering at a very early age indications of an aptitude for his favourite pursuit in his boy, he rendered him the inestimable service of seeing that he devoted sufficient time from the engrossing attractions of tops and marbles to master the arduous beginnings of the study of music, while yet the opening mind and pliant organs were most docile. Although young Balfe received his first instructions in the art of violin-playing from his father, he was soon handed over to other professors, as his capacity for absorbing musical knowledge widened with astonishing, indeed devouring, speed. He thus came under the tuition successively of Mr. Meadows, a bandmaster, and of Mr. O'Rourke, or Rooke—as he afterwards called himself—a musician of remarkable talent, destined to become known to fame subsequently as the composer of "Amilie, or the Love Test," and to stand in some sort in rivalry of his boy-pupil, who had, however, already outshot him by a year in the race for public acknowledgment.

Meadows had noticed the little fellow's delighted and eager attention to the performance of his band, while the Balfe family were at Wexford for the benefit of the father's declining health, and his offer to give him instruction having been accepted, the course of teaching commenced and bore fruit, with what swift

precocity may be judged by the fact that at the end of six months, and before the urchin tyro was seven, he had composed and scored for his master's band a polacca which was duly performed, the executants having considerable difficulty in believing from whose infant hands the piece had emanated. It was this proof of the vocation of his son which induced the elder Balfe to return to Dublin, where the young musician was confided to Rooke, who soon after produced him, in May, 1816, when he was barely eight, at a concert given in the Royal Exchange. The composition entrusted to the juvenile violinist for his début was a concerto by Mayseder, previously unknown to the public, and from this may be estimated the confidence reposed in the precocious mastery of young Balfe over his instrument, not less than the grasp of his musical intelligence.

The success of this first public trial of the little virtuoso's powers was unbounded, and attracted towards the child, so manifestly endowed with the attributes of genius, that tide of fashionable notice and fussy patronage which, under the mistaken idea of fostering early talent, only tempts the cupidity or vanity of parents to crush the buds of future promise for the sake of rearing that sad or nauseous monstrosity, a "youthful prodigy." Fortunately for

little Michael the sound good sense and sincere affection of his father saved him from these dangers; and it must have required a stern effort to effect his rescue, for by some accounts he was, during a certain interval, seized upon by Dublin society, and petted and beset with all those flattering cajoleries to which all such young phenomena are unhappily exposed. Among other matters there is a story of a certain goat-carriage, with a complete team of bearded steeds, presented to the child, and driven by him in triumph through the streets—an infant car of fame; but the equipage had to be put down.

Another tale of this period is worth referring to as illustrating the perseverance and strength of purpose, already an integral part of the child's character, and which was, in after years, to help him through many an arduous achievement. His father was living some short distance from Dublin, and had asked the boy to come out to breakfast with him. The appointed hour came, but no Master Balfe was visible. An hour elapsed, and the anxiety of father and mother was reaching the point of alarm, when young Michael burst upon the view—his little cheeks red-hot, and melting into perspiration, and his frame bending beneath a huge unwieldy load, which proved to be a boat—another token of dilettante admiration, suited,

however, to the child's size and strength, and in which he had resolutely rowed himself along the canal, bravely dragging his craft along and landing it again at every intervening lock, until he had reached his journey's end!

Although it was with the violin that Balfe's apprenticeship, as an executive musician, commenced, the future *maestro*, grappling with baby hands that difficult instrument (a young Hercules throttling the snakes in his cradle), when it almost overmatched him in bulk, his ambition and eagerness for fresh acquisitions led him to try his powers on the whole range of instruments, wind and stringed, contained in the orchestra, and he acquired a marked proficiency on more than one, besides obtaining a general practical acquaintance with the relative resources of each individual instrument in turn. These circumstances render it easily intelligible that when passing from the care of Rooke to the joint guidance of Mr. James Barton and the well-known Alexander Lee, from whom he received a sound knowledge of thorough bass and composition, he should have given such substantial proofs of his natural capacity and superadded culture as are recorded of him. Such, for instance, as the production, when he was not yet nine, of the ballad to which words were subsequently set by Haynes

Bailey, and which, sung by Madame Vestris under the title of "The Lover's Mistake," when appearing as Phœbe in Poole's comedy of "Paul Pry," obtained a popularity, many even now living can remember, and which was an early foretaste of that fascination over the public ear he was destined to exercise so conspicuously. The composer himself used to tell that when, while still a boy, he came afterwards to London, he crept into the gallery of the theatre to hear his ballad sung, and on hearing the burst of applause with which it was greeted, became so excited with the proud consciousness of his triumph, that he communicated to his immediate neighbours the fact that he was the composer of the song they had just been applauding; naturally, however, with no other result than being scorned and ridiculed for a lying young boaster. Apropos of this early blossom of promise, though so eminently successful as to prove a little mine of profit to the enterprising publisher—Willis, of Bond Street—the solid benefit it brought to the composer was not exactly calculated to prove an undesirable stimulant to his thirst for base lucre, since his sole reward consisted in the presentation of twenty copies gratis. As little, however, would the hope of a rich reward as the intoxicating temptations of fame and public flattery which he actually experienced at this

time, have drawn aside the young and enthusiastic student from the steady and earnest pursuit of his art, with a view to compass its highest and most mature and complete achievements. Although he felt his ambition fired by such early and unexpected fame, he resisted the temptation to pursue the glittering bait of a premature popularity, and only devoted himself the more ardently to a course of solid and laborious study. For six years from the period when we left him giving the first early indications of the genius born in him, young Balfe studied his profession with assiduous industry. Occasionally he accepted an engagement to play at the public concerts in his native city, and became accepted as a violinist of established repute, and distinguished for the correctness and intelligence of his playing, and the singular grace and feeling he threw even into the lightest passages.

It was at this stage of his career that an incident occurred which has rather the character of romance than reality, and had well nigh the result of turning young Balfe away from the path leading to renown to one where doubtless he would have been equally successful, but the world would have been robbed of an abundant source of delight. The story according to family tradition runs thus. One morning

Mrs. Balfe received a visit at her house in Dublin, from an elderly stranger, who announced himself as an intimate friend of her uncle, a Mr. McNally, who, it was known, had while quite a young man, and after meeting with some success as a public singer, gone out to the West Indies, where he had become a planter, having had the good fortune to marry a woman of considerable wealth. This gentleman, the stranger informed Mrs. Balfe, had charged him as he was going to Europe, to discover his relations, and after making himself acquainted with them, to report to him on his return as to how they seemed to be faring in life. It needs hardly be told with how much interest this ambassador was received, not only by Mrs. Balfe, but by other connexions to whom his mission seemed the harbinger of future munificence. He was a welcome guest at all their houses, and hearty as Irish hospitality proverbially is, it never was more warmly, though perhaps it may have been more disinterestedly extended than in the case of "Mr. McNally's intimate friend." The eagerness of competition to gain the favourable opinion of the rich man's emissary, however, had a contrary effect to that contemplated by the rival relatives whose ingrained worldliness and self-interest it brought to light, in colours the more glaring as the exposure was un-

conscious. "Mr. McNally's friend" was in short very sincerely disgusted by Mr. McNally's relatives, with one solitary exception, and who this was the reader will doubtless have anticipated. There was indeed no room in young Michael Balfe's guileless heart for any sordid aspirations after wealth, present or prospective; on the contrary, the boy was sincerely taken with the stranger's kindly ways, and above all with his interesting conversation teeming with narratives and descriptions of strange countries and outlandish adventures; and the two would take long walks together, the boy an eager and enthusiastic listener to, and the old man a pleased and happy relator of, wondrous tales by "flood and field." If instead of his friend it had been Mr. McNally himself who had felt his sympathies so stirred and drawn towards the innocent, warm-hearted, high spirited boy, there would thenceforth have been no doubt to whom the golden favours of the childless old planter would have descended, especially when, to cap all that had gone before, the genial lad, on a hint being dropped that his uncle's wealth might not improbably become his, he exclaimed—"Oh! I don't care for that! I should like to see him, though, and go shooting and hunting with him and be good to him and cheer him up if he is lonely there without his kinsfolk."

Well, as the reader may have probably discovered for himself by this time, Mr. McNally was in point of fact his own ambassador. Relying on the changes which the lapse of years, a tropical climate, and the cares and anxieties of a large estate had wrought in his outward appearance, he had determined upon a plan to test the worthiness of his own relatives to become the heirs of his acquired wealth, a plan which was doubtless suggested by the theatrical reminiscences of his early career. Having satisfied his mind, and notwithstanding the touching trait above recorded of genuine amiability and open-hearted disinterestedness in his grand-nephew's disposition, he steadfastly kept his secret to the end, taking leave of his relatives in the character he had assumed; though, as he afterwards confessed in his letters, "the bright intelligent face of the boy Michael William" had well-nigh upset his resolution, as indeed it haunted him after his return—the one pleasant reminiscence of his romantic expedition to Europe. After some interval a letter was received from the old planter intimating his wish that the boy might be sent out to him to live with and be adopted by him, the heir of all his fortune. By that time, however, the die of young Balfe's destiny was cast, and the career on which he was determined to venture all his hopes,

all the ambition of his life, was irrevocably elected. His enthusiastic love and devotion for his chosen and cherished profession were now so fixed and sincere that even the bright prospect of immediate ease and luxury and future independence which, to so sanguine and joyous a nature as Balfe's ever was, might be supposed to have attractions even more than commonly powerful, were unhesitatingly abandoned, and Art claimed her child from that time forth, as she ever claims through every sacrifice the heart-worship of her true and legitimate offspring.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE Balfe was engaged, as we have described, in forwarding his musical education with strenuous efforts, the death of his father, which occurred in 1823, was destined to make not only a deep impression on the feelings of the boy of fifteen, but to become the turning-point which determined the direction of his future career. When the elder Balfe felt that his last moment was at hand, he sent for his boy to his bedside, that he might see how his father met the approach of death, and hear from his dying lips the last counsels and injunctions of a fond and watchful parent. Such an interview was calculated to leave a deep and unalterable impression on the lad's mind, who would henceforth be called upon to become the stay and protector of a widowed mother and her little family; and it was never, in after-life, referred to when the boy had become a man, without tokens of the deepest emotion. The trust which was thus

solemnly left him, Balfe faithfully and affectionately discharged to the best of his abilities from the commencement to the end, when his mother, who never ceased to receive evidences of her son's care and affection, died under his roof. The death of Mr. Balfe, senior, which was sudden and unexpected, had surprised him ere he had been enabled to secure a provision for his widow and children. When all was realized, but a scanty surplus remained, and the necessity for young Michael William's exertions was immediate and pressing. Although the sudden passage from comparative ease and comfort, accompanied by the flattering hope of being able to devote himself free from all other solicitudes to the highest ends of his profession, to the gloom and despondency which fell at once upon the household, was calculated to unnerve a firm man, young Balfe met the change, destructive as it was of his fondest dreams, with that buoyant courage and readiness of resource which nature had so fortunately added to her other gifts. The step he took to remedy his present condition was as sudden and unexpected as the event which had brought it about.

The "providence which shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will," worked with her usual implement, which men call chance. A week had passed

since young Balfe's father was laid in the grave, and the boy, oppressed by the gloom that still hung undissipated over the house of mourning, had strolled out in the twilight to breathe the free and unconfined air, and invoke its fresh inspiration to the aid of his wearied and perplexed thoughts. Suddenly his glance rested on a playbill, for his unconscious steps had led him before the doors of the theatre. His eye took in the information that Mr. Charles Horn, the celebrated singer and composer, was to appear "for the last time" that night, previous to his departure for England. His eye had seen this, but to his brain the announcement reached not until he had passed listlessly on, vaguely dreaming over his fate, and then the words flashed upon his inner sense, bearing with them much the same prophetic interpretation that the famous bell-chimes bore upon the ear of Whittington. Balfe turned again upon his steps, and drew once more towards the theatre, his mind crowded with teeming thoughts that, as they pressed on, told him that here was the crisis of his fate; that now he must do or despair, and that not a day, not a minute, was to be lost, for Charles Horn would soon be home and in bed, and to-morrow he would be on his way to London; and if the said Charles Horn was to take Michael William Balfe with him—

and this was the wild delightful idea that had seized, with desperate fascination, on the boy's mind—he must see him before he left the theatre. Now or never was it with him, indeed; and summoning up all his courage, young Balfe strode to the stage-door, and having sent up his name to the popular singer, was soon after admitted to his dressing-room.

Mad as the thought might seem that had thus worked itself into action, there was method in it, nevertheless, for children are close reasoners, even in their most childish dreams. Charles Horn had heard him play at a concert, and the praise the boy's performance had won from him, had had a ring of sincerity in its warmth of enthusiasm which led young Balfe to fancy that he, who was willing to encourage so heartily with words, might be induced to continue his patronage with deeds. That his heart misgave him when he came into the presence of one so gratuitously appointed arbiter of his destinies is probable enough; but neither misgiving nor awe deterred him from fulfilling his purpose. Questioned as to the cause of his visit, he openly stated that his most earnest desire was to get to London, but that his mother being too poor to furnish means for the journey, he had come to ask him, seeing that he was about to leave to-morrow for the very place towards which all his

thoughts and ambitions were directed, whether he could not be prevailed upon to take him along with him. The appeal was certainly startling, but Horn received it favourably; and though others might have been equally won by the artless trustfulness no less than by the manly candour of such a prayer, the singer must be praised and thanked, too, for his ready accession to which, in all probability, the world owes that Balfe's genius was not left to pine in obscurity.

An appointment was taken for an early hour the next morning, when Balfe was to come, accompanied by his mother, to Horn's lodgings. Astonished as she must have been on hearing the bold step taken by her boy, all other feelings must have been absorbed in grief at the necessity of parting with one whose presence was her best consolation under the blow from which she was yet staggering; for, doubtless, her mind acknowledged that the measure was likely to prove to her son's best advantage, though the pang of separation was the keener as her affection was heightened by the pride she felt in the distinction already awarded to the talents of the young musician.

By eight in the morning the widowed mother and her son presented themselves at the residence of the popular vocalist; the one full of hopes and dreams of future celebrity, the other struggling with this

fresh load of sorrow laid on her bereaved and aching heart. Horn proposed that young Balfe should be articled to him for seven years; and there being nothing unreasonable under the circumstances in such a stipulation—for high as his estimate of the boy's talents might be, he was assuming a considerable responsibility in taking charge of him—it was accepted, and in another two hours the sad parting between mother and son had taken place, and Balfe was on his way to London, under the protection of his suddenly appointed master. To his ambitious and ardent mind the way now seemed open to him to fame and fortune; though, according to all accounts, none knew better than he who thus, young and inexperienced, was taking his first step into the great world that, though the foot may be placed on the first round of the ladder, every advance upward is only to be won by fresh and persevering exertion; and that neither money nor renown are apt to come within the grasp of those who seek them, save at the purchase of self-sacrificing toil, and long and strenuous endeavour.

It was while Balfe was still receiving on all sides the most flattering tokens of the appreciation in which his precocious talents were held, and might have easily become a little social lion, that his father's death fell

upon him like a sudden cloud on a bright summer day; and it was a proof of the sterling good sense of the boy, as well as an earnest that he would have the firmness and perseverance to bring his little bark to safe moorings in spite of all obstacles—as was prefigured in his dealings with the toy-boat—that he should not have been tempted to remain in the same atmosphere of adulation, and rely on the patronage of these flattering friends. He must have divined with premature world-knowledge that there was little substantial reliance to be placed on this sort of fashionable protection, always dictated by the most selfish and capricious motives, and ready to treat the idolized pet of to-day with the neglect, and afterwards insolence, which ever falls on a cast-off favourite on the morrow; when he sought the apparently more adventurous, but really more rational, support of Mr. Charles Horn, and consented to a contract which must have implied to his mind an immediate and very considerable sacrifice. On this point, and before proceeding further to relate how Balfe prospered in London after this important step, it should be stated at once that the stipulations then entered into by the young musician, and exacted probably as a proof of his earnestness of purpose, rather than with any ulterior view towards a result profitable to himself,

such as is frequently the basis of engagements of this sort between master and pupil, were set aside by Horn, who very generously left Balfe perfect liberty of action, and contented himself by acting towards him as an enlightened and prudent counsellor, and an active and most serviceable friend. An instance of high-minded liberality such as this deserves the more a distinct and careful record, as probably the subject is one more likely to afford examples of a contrary force. Moreover it illustrates in a very marked way what will become abundantly apparent in the course of this narrative—namely, the good fortune that almost unvaryingly smiled upon each stage of Balfe's career. It was the first set of the tide that bore him—certainly not without intervening storms and gusts of foul weather, nor without steady toil and sharp look-out and good seamanship, but with an astonishing preponderance of fine weather and favourable breezes—to the port of his ambition—an honoured niche in the Temple of Art. Fame, love, and friendship were the companions of his voyage, and Fortune showered on him not a few of those substantial favours we affect to despise as dross, but which form very useful ballast as we part on our journey with the more precious merchandize of youth and hope.

CHAPTER III.

ONCE London was reached, it was not long before the bright-witted, warm-hearted lad, with his brilliant talents and frank and manly bearing, had made—thanks to the kind introduction of his patron—a goodly number of friends among the most eminent and influential members of the musical profession. Before ten days were over he had seen and conversed with not a few whose names he had learned to regard not only with that mingled awe and interest with which young people are impressed by those who have acquired public celebrity, but with the respect of a diligent and zealous student towards those who have advanced to the position of eminent masters or accomplished adepts. The privilege of being admitted to the acquaintance of men who had fought and won their way to the foremost ranks by their talents and industry, was well calculated to add fresh stimulus, if needed, to his purposed exertions, and to sustain his

courage as he surveyed the field he had longed to reach, and where so many were struggling amidst a thousand difficulties, only a few of whom were ever destined to emerge victorious from the conflict.

The period when Balfe arrived in London, a cadet, as it were, in the tuneful army of the followers of Apollo, was not, however, one of such brilliant achievements, either on the stage or in the concert-room, as to cause any overwhelming discouragement in his emulous bosom. It was indeed a dull and dreary epoch, even for the annals of England's progress in the career of musical practice and appreciation. If the future dramatic composer had any thoughts at so early a time germinating in his brain, which tended to give his plastic ideas any such direction, there was no model before him that could kindle his enthusiasm, or offer a single characteristic on which his genial spirit could fasten, either for imitation or as a starting-point for future development. Of any musical work on the stage, such as could be called an opera in its present accepted sense, there was no example, save on the boards devoted exclusively to the Italian opera, at Her Majesty's Theatre, which was supported exclusively by the patronage of the aristocracy and the votaries of fashion, and could have little or no influence on the musical taste of the

public at large, or on the form of the musical entertainments presented to them in theatres. The only exception to this sweeping assertion that could be adduced, is Dr. Arne's "Artaxerxes," which was originally modelled on the Italian lyrical drama of his day, and the intrinsic merits of which had retained it in the position of a stock-work wherever professed vocalists were engaged as part of a theatrical company, even long after the style of which it was an example had become too obsolete even to be burlesqued. For eighty years the individual excellence of Dr. Arne's successful attempt to Anglicise Italian lyrical forms and Italian style, maintained it in uninterrupted possession of the stage, and no prima donna made her début who did not select the character of Mandane as the most incontestible means of satisfying her judges of her powers of execution—the celebrated *bravura* air, "The Soldier tired of War's Alarms," being the crucial test on which the result of the ordeal depended.

By the side of this solitary remnant of a bygone period, no alliance of musical and dramatic forms sustained its existence, except the ballad opera or musical melodrama. Bishop was the favourite composer of the day, and well deserved his celebrity, but even his operatic works were but little more than

dramas, with songs, duets, glees, &c., interspersed. Such productions as "The Slave," "The Sons of Java," and others, could certainly not claim the distinctive title of operas; and the only work which from its plan and character could be considered as falling under that designation, "Aladdin," was not produced till a much later day than that of young Balfe's first introduction to the metropolis. One of Bishop's chief titles to popularity in connexion with the theatre, was the constitution of vocal pieces to be introduced into the plays of Shakspeare, and some of his most charming melodies have been composed under this exigency, the simple attractions of the "bard's" works alone being considered then, as they have been since, as insufficient to insure public patronage.

At Covent Garden and Drury Lane, in the intervals of purely dramatic work, when nothing more attractive was at hand, so-called operas were produced, imported from foreign sources, and mutilated and dishonoured to suit what the managers estimated to be the standard of public taste; such estimate being then, as now, a merely libellous pretence for the reflection of their own obstinate prejudice and hopeless ignorance. Alas! how often is the poor public abased for the sins of those who pretend to cater for his palate, and

who set down as want of discrimination his good-natured tolerance of miscalled entertainments, which are the result of meanness and incapable blindness towards struggling merit, and extravagant submission to the overbearing exactions of acquired reputations, long after they have been forfeited by the exhaustion of public favour with the resources on which it rested! These were the days when Rossini's "Barber of Seville," in its English dress, was made to resemble one of Walter Scott's dramatized and operatized novels, such as "Guy Mannering," for instance, and the part of Almaviva was given to the leading light comedian, while another character was introduced to sing his music in so much of the concerted pieces as it was considered would be tolerated by the public, or that convenient fiction, so dubbed by the manager as an apology for his miserable ineptitude. Even "Der Freyschutz," the production of which was a short time afterwards to infuse a new spirit into the treatment of musical works for the stage, and open the eyes of the public as to the capabilities of the lyrical drama—even Weber's masterpiece was made to assume, in a great measure, the form of a ballad-opera when introduced at the English Opera House; the present Lyceum, by the interpolations foisted in by Braham and Miss Stephens of popular airs, which

would have driven the unhappy Karl Maria mad with wonder and despair.

There was only one form of musical composition which was at that time, as it has always been both since and before, to the honour of England be it said, treated with the respect and reverence due to it, and which maintained an especial hold on the sympathies and enlisted the interest and patronage of the public; and this was the Oratorio. The sacred nature of the subject, the deep religious feeling pervading its treatment, combined with its semi-dramatic character, invested this class of compositions with a peculiar charm in the eyes of the earnest, Bible-loving English people, and all classes combined to support musical performances taking this direction. Nor is this predilection to be wondered at, even setting aside any other cause, when it is considered that it was through the Oratorios of the great Handel that the public acquired a familiarity with this style of composition; and it was his mighty genius that directed and developed the public taste for these sublime examples of the powers and resources of the art of music. Not only in London, but in provincial towns where cathedral choirs existed, or associations of amateurs were established to promote the love and study of music through public and private concerts,

the execution of works taking a religious form constituted a prominent object, and the cultivation of this style of musical composition entered largely into the life and pursuits of all grades, tinging their feelings and moulding the tone and appreciative faculties of their minds. And seeing that there was thus an antagonism set up towards the stage among the very classes whose musical education and enthusiasm for the art had the deepest and most solid foundation, the cause of the decay, or rather the naturally miserable condition of the lyrical drama among us, becomes obviously apparent, and should be taken into estimate when the musical character of the nation is discussed.

It is not that music had died out among us, but the sap that should have nourished that particular form best adapted to the stage was diverted into another and all-absorbing direction. Guiding themselves by the popular current so evidently set towards the religious style, the managers of theatres came to the decision to supply the prevailing demand within the walls of their establishments, whither they sought to attract the stream of patronage by giving a series of concerts during the forced closing of theatres at Lent time, and to these they gave the title of Oratorio Concerts. As had been wisely foreseen, they not only had the effect of reconciling

a large proportion of the public with an arena supposed to be under the special patronage of the evil one, but they filled the treasury at a time when the legislature of the land imposed upon them an enforced "lock-out," greatly to the detriment of their interests. Covent Garden was the first to take this prudent course, and the example was quickly followed by Drury Lane. Although at first the religious character of the original programme was strictly adhered to, the mixed nature of the audiences attracted produced an influence over the character of the performances; and gradually, by trifling concessions at first to the demand for secular pieces, and subsequently by a larger admixture from profane sources, the concerts became, in point of fact, so miscellaneous in the composition of their programmes, that the title of Oratorio Concerts became little more than a designation for music in Lent.

It was to play at these so-called Oratorio Concerts that young Balfe, soon after his arrival in London, obtained his first professional engagement. His Dublin reputation as a violinist had had an echo in the musical circles of the metropolis, and being not entirely unknown to fame, "it was not a very difficult matter for him to obtain a position in the orchestra at Drury Lane, from which he rose to the

rank of first violinist, to him being confided, on alternate nights with the celebrated Mori, the violin solo, which was one of the fixed and most popular items of the programme. Such an honourable position, gained at so early an age, produced the healthiest impression upon the young man. *Honneur oblige*, and the fact that all eyes were fixed upon him, steadied an exuberance of vanity or intoxication that might have been kindled by such precocious fame, imposing the necessity of hard and constant work to remain worthy of this rivalry with an artist of such established eminence; and the laborious studies which were thus forced upon him served to enlarge his stock of ideas, and to mature his practical acquaintance with the technical development and manipulation of musical thoughts to a degree which was of essential service to him in after-life, and greatly influenced his remarkable facility of composition.

CHAPTER IV.

AT the close of these Oratorio Concerts, Balfe had made a sufficient mark to be in no fear of having to endure a long interval of unprofitable inaction. By the interest of the same kind patron who had procured him his first engagement he was now to enter the orchestra of Drury Lane during the theatrical session, and thus commenced his connexion with an establishment to which he was not long afterwards destined to bring many a season of prosperity, and where he obtained the first honours of his brilliant career as a composer. The musical director of Drury Lane was at that time the well-known "Tom Cooke"—for seldom was he ever spoken of under any less familiar designation—whose reputation for skill as a musician, though merely a conductor and arranger, must have been something beyond our present conception, to judge by the autocratic manner in which he was allowed to tamper with the chefs-d'œuvre of men, whose

genius will flourish when the name of their ruthless mutilator will scarcely be admitted in a biographical dictionary. Cooke, however, seems to have been an undoubted good fellow, a jovial bon-vivant and an inexhaustible retailer of witticisms, original and collected, and in the theatrical world this has been frequently known to be a sufficient basis for the building up of the most colossal reputations, which, however, rapidly die out and are dissipated with the fumes of the banquets that have so egregiously inflated them.

It was, perhaps, the convivial pre-occupations of the popular conductor which procured young Balfe an opportunity of manifesting in an extraordinary manner his remarkable talent and the early maturity of his judgment and general *esprit de conduite ;* for not long after becoming a member of Mr. Cooke's orchestra that gentleman was keen enough to discover how much real knowledge and capacity lay beneath the young violinist's brilliant execution, and selected him as his *locum tenens* when the calls upon the popular conductor's time and talents enforced his presence elsewhere. Many a time in Tom Cooke's absence did young Balfe wield his chief's bâton, and with a result so unvaryingly successful that the delegation was never repented of by the great man himself; but what is

stranger still, was never the cause of murmur or complaint on the part of the orchestra, many of whom might, from their seniority and acquired repute, consider themselves as slighted by the promotion over their heads of an unknown youngster. The fact is, in all probability, young as Balfe was at that time, he had already proved himself much more capable of the office than its legitimate tenant; but this would not of itself be sufficient to account for the phenomenon of the acquiescence of a number of grown men and acknowledged proficients in their art to the sway of a lad, an entirely fresh recruit in the rolls of fame, and barely known beyond the circle of his immediate friends and acquaintances. For the cause of this unusual state of things we must look as well to the influence which real merit always exerts when accompanied by modesty, as to that fascinating, that electrical spark of genial sympathy which, even as a boy, burnt in the breast and sparkled in the eye of Balfe, conciliating all hearts and tempers and bearing them along in a stream of kindliness and good will toward the man, if not of unvarying admiration or worship for his genius. Yet let it be remembered that while many have had this gift of winning sympathy, and not a few have won exceptional positions by the brilliancy of their original gifts, it is more rare to see

these fortunate spoiled ones of nature sufficiently wise in their generation and masters of themselves, amidst the giddy flood of favouring tides, to steer a steady and even course, avoiding the dangers of a too easy reliance on their own lucky star. It is those, on the contrary, whom Heaven helps the most from whom the most exertion is required, lest they founder by the very weight of the cargo they have shipped free of cost. It is therefore the more to the credit of Balfe's natural firmness of character, and to the earnestness with which he regarded life, and estimated the essential conditions of success in it, that he should have made such excellent use of his natural advantages, adding to them all that could be accomplished by unremitting study and the steady cultivation and development of his inborn qualities.

CHAPTER V.

WHILE advancing in the practical career of a musician, Balfe placed himself under the tuition of Mr. C. F. Horn, the then organist of the Chapel Royal at Windsor, and titular professor of music to the Royal Family. This gentleman was the father of the popular vocalist to whom young Balfe was so deeply indebted for the generous assistance which had placed him, as it were, at the foot of the ladder of fame, and helped him up more than one step towards the summit; and under the well-skilled guidance of the father the protégé of the son devoted himself assiduously to the study of composition, acquiring in a very short time a really marvellous facility in scoring musical ideas with extraordinary rapidity. The ease with which the young musical student could sit down and complete a full instrumental score of any melody with a dashing expertness which blinded him to the consciousness of any difficulty in the task,

became notorious among those immediately about him, and as this practical skill and readily available knowledge is very frequently the one thing wanting which debars many a maturer aspirant from grasping at the honours of recognised mastership, it is not astonishing that talents so ripe in the possession of a raw and inexperienced youth should have tempted one of these musical pretenders to turn them to his own advantage by an easy bargain, in which both honour and profit would be all on one side. Accordingly Balfe has often been heard, when among intimate friends, to relate—in a style of covert humour that made it sound like a chapter from "Gil Blas"—how he was "done" in the most complete fashion at this time by a foreigner recently tempted to the British shores, that Eldorado of the needy and incompetent stranger, by the example of many a successful predecessor, and who had, by help of a moderately good voice, a quick ear, and the magical influence of a foreign accent, worked himself to a position which needed only the laurels of composership to become illustrious and lucrative to the measure of the highest ambition.

The well-grown and snowy fleece of the innocent young Michael was an appetizing *bonne-bouche* to this wolf in sheep's clothing; and, accordingly, he laid

his plans. Suddenly the rising musician found himself the subject of the most overwhelming attention from the favourite of fashion, whose name Balfe, to his honour be it spoken, never could be induced to let out. Invitations to breakfast, dinner, and supper followed each other rapidly; and though it was not strictly "no song no supper," the good-natured youth found himself invariably seated at the piano, and returning, like a true singing bird, floods of unpremeditated melody for his handsome treatment. These he was induced to note down and score accompaniments to, when they quickly found their way to the music publisher as the original production of his wily entertainer, whose reputation flourished with ever increasing prosperity. At last the easy acquiescence of the victim and the increasing impudence of his sharp acquaintance culminated in a final *coup*, which ought, if anything, to have opened the eyes of the lad to the shearing process to which he was being so mercilessly subjected. But probably the real pleasure Balfe took in thus trying the extent of his powers, added to the flattery implied in the request, blunted his perspicacity.

The sham *maestro* having been entrusted by a theatrical manager with the task of producing a fresh score for an old opera, with the stipulation that the

work should be done in a week, the undertaking was accepted by him, in full reliance that the industry and facility of his serviceable young friend would carry him triumphantly through. The event proved he had not overrated the capacity of his little genius, whom he tempted to accomplish the laborious achievement by the promise of ten pounds when the score should be in his hands. This paltry remuneration appeared, in the eyes of the youth, a golden avalanche; and with the glittering prospect before him he laboured night and day, till, before the end of six days, the score was completed, and the promised reward weighed palpably in the palm of the delighted lad.

The hard work and incessant application which had been needed to earn this guerdon, as greedily handled by the victim as was the twenty-fold more valuable MS. by the impostor, suggested to the buoyant spirits of young Balfe that relaxation of the overtaxed mind which is technically called "a spree;" and the composer would wind up this tale of innocence and artifice by relating, with delight at the reminiscence of his boyish freak, how he and an extemporized companion contrived to get rid of the reward of his talent and industry in about a third of the time occupied in gaining it. The young fellows

took an equestrian trip to Rochester, where they dined sumptuously aud slept luxuriously, assuming for the nonce, in the exuberant sense of being "happy as lords," improvised titles of distinction, *Sir George*-ing and *Lord William*-ing each other to their hearts' content, and being amply repaid for the violence done to their consciences by the amusing deference and obsequious attentions procured for them from the host and his myrmidons by the innocent disguise.

There was that happy balance in the ingredients of Balfe's composition which rendered him as ready to give way to his native temperament and treat a passing windfall as if it were the purse of Fortunatus, giving himself up to the free and careless enjoyment of a vein of luck, and tasting with unalloyed gusto the cup of pleasure whenever the blind goddess presented it to his lips, as any Irishman that ever claimed the protection of St. Patrick; while at the same time he could face the realities of human existence, and encounter the difficulties and toils that lie in the path of ambitious spirits with a resolute manliness and a persevering ardour that insured success, because it so clearly recognised the possibility of defeat. What Balfe was as a boy he remained through his life; and no better testimony can be given of the happy completeness of his nature, while it will serve

as an apology, if any be thought necessary, for dwelling somewhat at length on these early days of his career. Endowed with extraordinary rapidity of perception, and susceptible of an equally swift and ready flow of original ideas, he was a most delightful companion, fully understanding and being able to carry out that "give and take" principle, without which social intercourse is a polite boredom. Allied to these qualities, so valuable to others, he possessed, as we have said, the energy of character that shirked no necessary conflict with toil or difficulty; and what is still more essential, an unusual capability of getting through a large amount of work with little apparent strain. This faculty was the more valued by himself, as he loved to give his buoyant nature a loose rein in the hours of leisure; and when the day's allowance of stiff "collar work" was accomplished, which was always by an early hour in the day, he delighted to be the gentleman at large, scouting with the frankest contempt the puppyism of appearing overdone with work—a hollow-cheeked devotee at the inexorable shrine of Art. Equally did he avoid the contrary affectation of treating production as the result of a divine afflatus—a gift of the gods costing nothing but the trouble of transcribing the heavenly inspiration. One essential characteristic he had in common with

all men of genius, though he certainly endeavoured to disguise it, as opposed to his notion of manliness, and succeeded in doing so to the extent of creating an impression among many who believed they knew him well, that its absence was a weak point in his disposition—I mean sensitiveness, and its co-ordinate imaginative impressibility. Balfe possessed these to an almost morbid extent; as, indeed, all who are psychologists to any degree will be prepared to hear, when they call to mind the plastic variety, abundance, and depth of his musical invention.

An anecdote is told belonging to the period in his life now under notice, which, as it illustrates this last-named and least-known side of his character, in connexion, moreover, with his love of frolic, may fitly find a place ere this chapter closes on Balfe's boyhood. The Drury Lane orchestra had been engaged to take part in a series of concerts at the Vauxhall Gardens, and as this suburban region was in those pre-locomotive days considered "out of town," the companions of Balfe's labours thought it would be convenient to engage lodgings for the night in the locality itself. The notion, however, had not been peculiar to themselves, and a brisk demand for all the shelter of this kind that could be procured had obliged Balfe, as a last refuge, to seek quarters in a queer sort of hovel

between an inn and a common lodging-house. Even here, however, the landlady hesitated a good deal before she could make up her mind to find him a bed. Her evident confusion of manner and reluctance suggested to Balfe's companions that it was the haunted room of the house he was about to be turned into, as in all ghost stories it is the last-comer who has to be drafted off to keep company with the skeleton in the cupboard; and a desperate attempt was made, half in earnest, and half joking, to make the young fellow nervous. Balfe, however, defied all supernatural horrors, and bravely took possession of the vacant bedroom, where he passed the night in a sound sleep, without even an ugly dream to discomfit him.

It was only in the morning that he made a discovery that would have shaken the soul of the strongest-minded sceptic, and given a thrill to nerves of steel. Nevertheless, as only he himself knew the fact subsequently disclosed, he appeared before his companions rosy, fresh, and self-possessed, and without a trace of any converse with beings of another world, thus turning the tables on his would-be tormentors. Something, however, in his manner betrayed his mental condition and awakened their curiosity, when on following up the scent they found out that an old woman had died only the previous day in that self-

same room, and it was the debate in the hostess's mind whether she should turn away a profitable customer, or turn her deceased relative's mortal remains out of the bed to make room for him, leaving the defunct old body to pass the night literally shut up in a cupboard, which had caused the confusion noticed in her manner. In this agreeable company had the young lad calmly and unconsciously reposed after the day's fatigues, and the appalling revulsion of feeling and retrospective horror caused by his discovery of this sharp stroke of business on the part of the landlady may be easily imagined. The thought of what his feelings would have been had he in the dead of night accidentally opened that extemporized sarcophagus and allowed the lifeless old mummy to fall into his arms, clung to him with harrowing vividness, and made him, for years after, search every cranny of any room where he was to sleep; while the reminiscence of that chamber of horror would, whenever he told the story, to the latest day call up a look of shuddering dread, as though he stood in the very presence of the ghastly sharer of his apartment.

We have now reached another turning-point in the life-career of the young composer, when under circumstances tinged with the romance that coloured so many incidents of his life, he was to touch the goal

towards which his dearest aspirations had long tended, and to visit the classical home of his cherished art, where alone he believed he could best mature his studies, both as a creative musician and as a vocalist; for the discovery that he possessed a baritone voice of fine quality had turned his versatile thoughts—while as yet uncertain of his true vocation—towards adopting a profession, for a time at least, in his choice of which sympathy with all forms of dramatic activity was, in all likelihood, the determining motive, rather than any settled predilection. But we are trenching upon the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Balfe made the discovery that Nature had completed his musical organization by the gift of a baritone voice, the sweetness and flexibility of which was praised by his friends, who considered it as deserving of cultivation, notwithstanding its only moderate power and volume, he forthwith commenced a course of vocal studies with that ardour and assiduity which he threw into any pursuit he had fairly made up his mind to take up. The progress he had achieved at the end of a year induced him to make a serious attempt in a new field, and try his fortune as an actor and singer, his natural aptitude for histrionic assumption justifying an inclination which was prompted by the warmest enthusiasm for the actor's art. Accordingly he seized an opportunity which offered itself through the presence in London of a Mr. Crook, then manager of the Norwich Theatre, and on the look-out for rising talent. Having heard Balfe sing, Crook

offered him the chance of making his début in the character of Caspar in "Der Freyschutz," Weber's opera being just then in the height of its fame. Though the brilliant occasion was bravely seized, fortune deigned not to smile on the result. That merciless asphyxiator of sucking aspirants to dramatic fame, commonly designated stage-fright, fastened a grip on the unhappy Caspar which no administration of stimulant would relax. A series of mishaps occurred, culminating in an alarm of fire through some unrehearsed effect in the incantation scene, and for the first time Balfe became acquainted with the word failure.

Disgusted for a time, he returned to his previous vocations, finding a place still open for him in the orchestra of Drury Lane. The determination to make himself a position as a dramatic singer, however, was never abandoned, but clung to, on the contrary, with only the more tenacity for the defeat he had encountered. Unlike most men of sanguine temperament, he was not to be diverted from an object, once cherished, by temporary discomfiture. The thought of maturing his vocal and theatrical studies abroad, and more especially under the genial influence of Italian skies, and the glorious traditions of a country to whose soil all forms of Art seem

indigenous, now took possession of him, and was the kindling motive of many a day-dream, as well as the incentive to many an hour spent in laborious study. Having become convinced that sooner or later the longed-for opportunity would present itself, he determined to acquire a competent knowledge both of French and Italian; and, with his accustomed facility, in a short time he became a tolerable proficient in both languages.

Though Balfe's faith in his lucky stars may have been steady and firm enough to inspire him with due patience and philosophy to await the moment when his hopes would be fulfilled, he probably would have rejected it, as the height of improbability, had an oracle revealed to him the precise means by which this fulfilment was brought about. In truth, out of the region of pure invention, few are the instances on record of a stroke of fortune bearing so strong a resemblance to—with all reverence be it written—a direct intervention of Providence, as what now befel Balfe. In the case of his sudden transmigration to London under the favouring and, as it proved, most precious auspices of Charles Horn, the boy's own will and determination of purpose were potential influences in bringing about the desired end. In what we are about to relate, the views so fondly

cherished by Balfe were destined to be realized, as it were, by the wave of an enchanter's wand, and through a fortuitous combination of circumstances as strange as they were impossible to be foreseen.

At the dinner-table of Mr. Heath, a banker, a gentleman who had exerted all the social influence he possessed, which was considerable, in favour of young Balfe, receiving him in his own intimate circle, and endeavouring by every means to bring into notice the talents he admired so much, the youthful musician was one day introduced to an Italian nobleman of Roman origin, and possessed of great wealth. Count Mazzara—such was the title of the distinguished guest—no sooner set his eyes on Balfe than he was observed to turn deadly pale, and seemed almost on the point of fainting. Quickly recovering, however, he stammered forth a few words in recognition of the introduction, and remained, almost to the end of the evening, silent and absorbed, apparently in deep thought or melancholy retrospection. Consequences so grave arising from an introduction to the host's young protégé were most unusual, Balfe's disposition being wont to exert a very different influence on all who came near him. The mystery was, however, completely and satisfactorily cleared up by the Count himself before he left the house. Taking

the host aside, he informed him that if he had appeared strange in his demeanour, and not in his ordinary mood, that evening, the fact was to be attributed to the shock produced on him by the marvellous resemblance borne by Balfe to an only and fondly-cherished son, whom he had lost not much more than a year before.

The Count's agitation had been extreme, and at first attracted general notice, but as dinner proceeded the sort of chill thrown over the party melted, and ere the evening was over things took their usual course. The incident passed out of recollection, and Balfe was asked to sit at the piano, and indulge the company with his playing and singing. He gratified them with several of his own compositions, which he rendered with such a true instinct for the beautiful, so delicate a sense of finish and exact propriety of expression, and with such a natural *entrain* of feeling, whether gay or pathetic, that the Count listened enraptured; and the interest created by the accidental resemblance, which had so powerfully affected him on his presentation to Balfe, was enhanced in a proportionate degree to the charm exercised by this exhibition of natural and cultivated talent. Finally, when after this the violin was taken up by the young virtuoso, and he displayed the really masterly com-

mand he had acquired over that queen of all musical instruments, Count Mazzara's enthusiasm knew no bounds, and admiration of the young man's talent, combining with the tender interest awakened by the resemblance which had so moved the father's heart, each feeling heightening the other, an impression was made, resulting in the unexpectedly fortunate and golden opportunity now offering itself to Balfe, to which allusion has been made.

The overwhelming impulse arising in the Italian nobleman's heart to befriend a youth of such promise, and who seemed to claim his sympathy and protection, as it were, by a direct mandate from heaven written in his features, was not allowed to evaporate ere it translated itself into deeds, or words that have the force of deeds. An immediate overture was made to the young musician to allow himself to become the formally adopted protégé of the Count; who proposed to take him at once to Rome, and provide for the furtherance of his musical studies, free from all and every other sublunary preoccupation. On his side, Balfe was not less prompt to chime in with the offer of the warm-hearted and enthusiastic patron, sprung up as it were expressly to realize the dream of his life. Equally impulsive was his grateful acceptance, and with characteristic swiftness of

decision, the proposal was immediately acceded to. The Count Mazzara was about to start for Rome forthwith, and Balfe was to accompany him, all the necessary expenses of his journey being defrayed by his patron, whose palazzo in Rome was thenceforth to be his fixed and only residence. Taking him by both his hands, "Remember," said the Count, "my house is now your home. The Countess Mazzara will open her arms to you as to another son, replacing him whom you resemble so marvellously, that even now I can scarcely contain the emotion which at first sight of you had well nigh overpowered me altogether."

Balfe was in a bewilderment of surprise at so strange a revelation; but delight at the prospect opening before him swept all other feelings away in a torrent of anticipated fruition to all his dearest hopes and most cherished ambition.

A few days sufficed to make the needful preparations for their voyage, and with a celerity becoming so theatrical an incident, with this new act in his life drama a new scene opened upon the eyes of the travelling student and his munificent patron. The first stage of their journey towards the enchanted south had brought them to Paris—in itself a worthy object for a pilgrimage to two beings of such

artistic temperament. It was not then so magnificent a city as it became under the successor of Louis Philippe, the monarch who at that time was taking his turn of supreme power in the whirligig of public affairs in France.

The work of embellishment had commenced, but the remains of the famous old Lutetia, the ancient Paris of Victor Hugo, were still considerable enough to present that old-world stamp and savour of the Middle Ages which is now gone from it for ever. How thirstily must the quick and pregnant imagination of the future composer have drunk in the vivid impressions of so new a scene, filling in with creative facility all the accessories of the olden days and the olden deeds as they suggested themselves to his even then well-stored mind; for Balfe was an industrious and most miscellaneous reader in his youth. It was, however, Paris as the great European centre of all artistic studies, the supreme judge and distributor of fame, particularly in matters musical, that must have most deeply and directly interested the youth on his first visit to the scene of more than one future triumph. The Count's position gave him access to all the musical celebrities at that time inhabiting the "capital of pleasure," and the genial intercourse nourished to a more fervent heat the flame of enthusiasm within

him. Moreover they attended all public places where musical entertainments were given, and Balfe was already enabled to form an estimate of the standard of continental art. As, however, the condition of music in Paris will come under notice hereafter, at a period only a few years later when Balfe returned thither after his Italian experiences, the subject need not be further entered into in this place.

One circumstance, however, connected with the then reigning musical celebrities of Paris must be here mentioned as an important indication of the progress already made by Balfe both in the theoretical and practical studies of his art. The distinguished post of Director of the Royal Conservatoire of Paris at this period was held by the celebrated Cherubini, and to him Count Mazzara introduced his young protégé. After hearing Balfe both on the piano and the violin and gauging the extent of his musical knowledge by the perusal of several compositions submitted to him by the young musician, he was so struck with the already competent acquaintance they displayed with the fundamental principles of composition, as well as the taste and inventive faculty of their author, that when he found, moreover, that the youthful aspirant showed himself so far on the right road to excellence that he had the best works of all the acknowledged

classics—Bach, Haydn, Handel, Beethoven, Mozart, and himself—at his finger ends, he delightedly offered to give Balfe instruction and superintend his further education.

The enthusiastic mind of the Count's protégé was, however, too ardently set towards the goal of all his thoughts, the genial site of all his airy castle-building—fair Italy—to be turned aside by the most tempting bait, and none could be more attractive to an earnest and ambitious student than such an offer and from such revered lips. Possibly, too, he judged practically of the greater importance it was to follow up the path of friendly and sympathetic patronage so opportunely opened to him, and with every expression of thankfulness and recognition of the flattery implied in the kind proposal of the venerable *maestro*, Balfe urged the inflexibility of his determination to proceed as he had previously purposed. How unusually Cherubini was impressed by young Balfe, may be judged by the courtesy and kindliness with which he insisted on a promise from the young man, should he at any time consider his services of advantage to him, to seek him out and freely ask assistance, which he might demand, said Cherubini, on the plea of "friendship, based on admiration." The twofold promise was not forgotten on either side, as subse-

quent events will prove. Meanwhile Balfe bade adieu to his new and revered well-wisher, and much sustained and encouraged by this fresh proof that he had not mistaken his vocation, proceeded towards his darling Italy, the land of promise of his own inward and prophetic revelations.

CHAPTER VII.

ALL who have had the same yearning desire to behold and revel in the enchanting scenery and climate of Italy; to drink, as it were, at the very source of the most glorious associations in history and poetry and science, with which the development of modern civilization is connected—and who with any tinge of intellectual culture has not been love-stricken by the attractions of the fair and favoured, the too beautiful Ausonia?—will sympathize with the inexpressible joy, the flood of happy and hopeful emotions that filled the breast of our young art-pilgrim as he approached, and at length touched, the teeming soil, and breathed the sun-saturated air of Italy. The strong analogy of temperament existing between the Irish races and those of Southern Europe was, be it here remarked, never more strikingly exemplified than in Balfe's warm, impulsive, and highly sensitive physical nature, and

the bright, ardent enthusiasm of his intellectual frame. An old friend and fellow-labourer of the composer—the dramatist Fitzball—to whose ingenuously romantic nature what might be considered in another affectation of expression was purely spontaneous, had a title for Balfe invariable as a Homeric epithet: he always spoke of him as the "Sunny Balfe." And a better-chosen description could not have been hit upon, nor could any of the sunniest of the actual children of Italy more directly call for its application than the youth whose life-story is now bringing him, as it were, to Italy as to another home, and in many respects a truer and more congenial home than his native soil; and—let it not be forgotten—the generous and kindly foster-mother and liberal appreciator of a genius which his own country only recognised with difficulty, and still grudges to honour as every land faithful to itself should honour the children who shed lustre on its annals and raise it in the estimation of other nations.

Before proceeding straight to Rome, their ultimate destination, Balfe's patron, with the thoughtfulness of a true friend, and something probably of the mingled feelings of a patriotic citizen anxious to show his country to the best advantage and a wealthy host doing the honours of his rich possessions, carried him

to several of the chief cities in their way, and lingered with him there, enjoying the eagerness with which his protégé delighted in all that was presented to his admiration. Buildings, monuments, galleries of art, were passed in review with happy avidity and never-tiring susceptibility to be pleased; but the eyes alone, it may be taken for granted, were not feasted. The ear had its succession of even choicer and more rapturous banquets; for universal and all-devouring as was the appetite of the future "tone-poet" for all forms of art, music, as the chosen field of his own peculiar activity, and for the cultivation of which he was specially organized and equipped by nature and education, attracted his most absorbed and frequent attention. Accordingly, much time was spent at the operatic theatres, and in hearing music of all kinds—vocal, instrumental, chamber, ecclesiastic, and dramatic.

The precise epoch was fortunately one of the most prolific and flourishing of the productive periods of Italian musical art. Rossini was still writing, and in the zenith of his fame and power. The third and more glorious crop which, when disgusted with his own countrymen he appealed to Paris, had eventually rewarded his renewed efforts to conquer another reputation in the teeth of a host of petty adversaries, was

not, it is true, yet harvested. But Italy, though she had ended by disputing the diploma of supremacy so enthusiastically granted almost at the very earliest notes uttered by the Swan of Pesaro, throve too well on these first fruits of his early genius—which were nothing less than a progression of masterpieces—to neglect them. Nor could the singers forego the splendid triumphs these works afforded them, the rendering of which had effected an entire revolution in the art of vocalization. Accordingly, Balfe had now an opportunity of hearing the works of the brilliant *maestro*, whom he resembled in more respects than one, executed with a perfection and a reverence for their integrity as new to him as it was deliciously appreciated. Pacini, a master even to this day insufficiently estimated, was yet active and in command of the stage; and Bellini's sweet, tender, and unapproachably light and graceful vein of melody was filling all Italy with the intoxication of idealized melancholy and delicately sublimated pathos—moving without laceration, dramatic without depth; while Donizetti's imaginative vigour, comprehensive range of fancy, light and stirring variety of invention, versatility of style, and copiousness of melodic ideas, was just beginning to draw attention to a genius whose upward flight towards regions of dazzling and ethereal splendour

was so soon to be hidden for ever in the dark and tempestuous clouds of mental derangement. The singers at that time flourishing comprised the best and most shining examples of the old and new schools; the disciples of the first still capable of justifying the apparently exaggerated praise awarded them; those of the second rejoicing in the plenitude of faculties whose enchantments reached to a period within the recollection of later generations. The Scala at Milan boasts to be the largest, and generally best conducted, theatre in Italy, as its frequenters are considered, or rather consider themselves, the severest and most uncompromising judges of musical excellence; and when young Balfe enjoyed so enthusiastically the results of this exceptional reputation, he was far from dreaming in how short a time he should himself have the honour of being heard as a composer in that vast and splendid arena, and passing with triumph through the perilous ordeal of that fastidious audience.

Not to anticipate on the period of Balfe's first public essays as a composer, let us follow him, after this appetizing foretaste of the wealthy store of precious experiences awaiting him to stimulate his studies, adorn his memory, and fertilize his fancy, to Rome, the ancestral abode of his noble patron;

where he was to be received with the affection only a son could claim, and where would fleet away swiftly as all human felicity, perhaps the happiest period of a life which, if not all strewn with roses, belied very emphatically the famous line of the French poet—

Aucun chemin de fleurs ne conduit à la gloire.

His first entrance under the battlements of the Palazzo Mazzara, as he was wont to relate the tale himself, had all the air of a chapter in a novel; but he must have been coo'd in by doves in opposition to old King Duncan's croaking ravens, if the omen is to be suited to the sequel. As the Count's travelling carriage swung through the Porta del Popolo, it was already evening, and ere the gates of the palazzo were reached, night had already wrapped in its mantle of mystery the streets and thoroughfares of the Eternal City, baulking the young traveller's hungry glances, eager to note and compare with the pictures of his fancy the first impressions of Rome the Imperial. The looming dusk-veiled objects that met his gaze only, however, strengthened within him the feeling of awe and anxious misgiving natural to one fast reaching a turning point in his life, which, as Fate might determine, would govern his future prospects, as according his reception in the new home offered him was

cordial or not. This state of mind was heightened to an almost unbearable strain of suspense as they were ushered by a throng of servants into the hall of the palazzo, and up a broad but feebly-lighted staircase to a vast and gloomy antechamber, and his heart beat wildly when, as a pair of doors were flung open, a flood of dazzling light burst on him, presenting to his bewildered brain a picture which ever remained as vivid in his memory as at the first moment his eye rested on the scene so dramatically prepared by the merely natural succession of events.

In a richly decorated room, under the strong light of a lamp, were seated at a table two ladies—the novelist would, as in professional duty bound, add, "evidently, by their noble demeanour and the refined outline of their features, of aristocratic birth"—and the biographer is constrained to use the same expressions in the cause of simple truth. The elder of the two ladies rose with stately action and advanced, when, to the increased excitement of Balfe, he beheld in the figure moving towards them, as it were in a dream, a vision of his own mother, and when the same sort of agitation he was himself a prey to seemed to seize upon the lady as her eyes rested on Balfe's features, now brought within the full glare of the light, his astonishment knew no bounds. "You see," said

Count Mazzara, stepping towards his wife, as if to support her in her agitation, "I redeem my promise; I bring you a son." The Countess had, in an instant—as had the Count in the scene at the dinner-table already described—noted and received the like deep shock from the astonishing resemblance borne by Balfe to the beloved son of whom they had been so recently bereaved. So profound and uncontrollable was the effect produced on the mother's feelings at the apparition, as if the grave had relentingly returned her treasure, that the Countess burst into tears, and with convulsive tenderness pressed the young man to her bosom, and sobbed out, "Si, si—ahi me, ahi me!" the most emphatic expression of profound emotion an Italian can use.

The violence of the first natural effects of so strange a resuscitation of the living image of an adored son subsiding, Balfe had to be formally introduced to the second and younger lady, a near relative of the family residing under the Count's roof, but who, if she too was struck with the resemblance in the new-comer, was not betrayed into any violent exhibition of emotion. As might be expected, when the family group was formed once more, with its additions, around the blazing lamp, little was spoken of beyond the wonderful likeness of the young musical

student to the lost son of the house, and all the circumstances which had accompanied the Count's first meeting with the young man, and the sudden impulse which had led him to propose the sort of adoption which constituted their present relations.

From this point it is somewhat humiliating to have to confess that if the biographer had to continue his narrative at the same high pitch of romantic interest that marks the incidents just related, he would have to trench in real earnest on the craft of the novelist, to whom the resemblance he has borne in the last two pages has been as accidental as that of young Balfe with the heir of the Mazzaras. With the knowledge he possesses of Balfe's character, never much changed from his boyhood, his thoroughly Irish high spirits and love of adventure and frolic, he could, with the assistance and inspiration of the works of the late Mr. Lever, and some dark hints dropped in occasional converse with the composer when discussing the vicissitudes of human life, sketch out a continuation of the romance of real life just begun that would be as truthful, no doubt, as two-thirds of the stories told by so-called intimate acquaintances, or acquaintances of acquaintances, as a set-off against the undesirable greatness, glory, and effulgence of men who have earned fame and celebrity in the teeth

of envy and stupidity—a set-off marvellous comforting to a large and highly respectable portion of the world, whose eyes are much inconvenienced by the disagreeable dazzle produced by the halo of greatness on small minds, and who could not bear to contemplate the flight of such eagles at all, except through the besmirched glasses kindly manufactured for them by the Mrs. Candours and Sir Benjamin Backbites of society. The space of a year or more, which must be left but little beyond a blank in Balfe's life, during which he resided under the protection of the Mazzaras, by whom he was treated throughout with parental affection, would, no doubt, if truthfully related afford some slight pickings for the appetites of those whose slavish instincts make them love to remind the rulers of the world that they are merely human. But even were it in the power of the present writer to fill up his canvas by realistic touches that would, he doubts not, greatly add to the popularity of the life-portrait he is striving to paint, he would refrain. Public men owe nothing to the world but that which belongs to their public work, and the private life of a great painter or a great author is as much entitled to be held inviolable as that of his tailor, bootmaker, or even publisher, all of whom would certainly howl most lamentably if the commercial status of their

respective firms were allowed to be mixed up with their little doings either behind the curtain of domestic life or in the *coulisses* of those other scenes of the world's stage where many a secret and sensational drama is enacted for which Respectability furnishes the funds, and the details of which occasionally come forth to the world when the worthy manager of the night-hidden "galantee show" unfortunately becomes a bankrupt, or commits a little indiscretion which brings him before the inconveniently critical audience of the Old Bailey.

Balfe was ever an unwilling letter-writer. Those, indeed, who copiously indulge in epistolary compositions are, I am disposed to think, either very weak-minded, and idle to boot, or have some indirect purpose in view of self-disguise or complacent self-glorification—incentives, both of which were far removed from Balfe's manly nature: perpetual activity and total freedom from any desire to usurp a reputation to which he felt in his own conscience he had no title, preserved his fingers from that cacoëthes scribendi which saves biographers a world of trouble, but too frequently substitutes a highly touched-up ideal for a real portraiture. Probably, moreover, he would not have consigned to paper, had he ever so pronounced a tendency to letter-writing, any such details

as would have afforded a meal to the lovers of post-mortem scandal—the ghouls of unsavoury gossip about the dead. Not that there is any ground to suppose there would be anything of this sort to note were the fullest light thrown on Balfe's sojourn in Rome, beyond such ordinary escapades as a high-spirited, handsome young Irishman could not fail to stumble on. He was too instinct with the true feelings of a gentleman to run any risk while under the roof of those who regarded him as a son, of shocking the most delicate feelings of propriety that might be entertained by the Count and Countess. But though Balfe undoubtedly availed himself with industry of the ample means now afforded him, for prosecuting not only his musical studies, but completing his general education, there is little doubt that he mingled the *utile* with the *dulci*, and cultivated the Graces as well as the Muses. One anecdote recorded of him savours rather of a freak of Carnival time than a specimen of his ordinary mode of diversion. He once created a lively sensation by appearing at one of the windows of the palazzo, dressed in the usual attire of the Countess; and there ogling, with very significant glances, any grave ecclesiastics who happened to be passing, to their inexpressible scandal and astonishment. Considering the likeness of feature existing

between the youth and his protectress, the joke was somewhat a violent one it must be admitted; but the privileges of Carnival time cover almost any degree of licence. Let it be admitted then, that at this happy period of his life, when history is silent, Balfe "played the Roman fool," in a sense very different from that of the Shakspearian expression, and that in the intervals of studious application he sowed the customary allowance of wild oats. In his case the crop, when grown to maturity, was turned to the tuneful service of the Muse, for he too could say in after years—

> Ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus avenâ
> Carmen——

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER shuffling and distribution of the cards of fate was now to end in turning up once again a trump card for the fortune-favoured Balfe, though not improbably, as so often happens with short-sighted mortals, the event that cut short his sojourn in Rome was at the time regarded in a very different light. In the early part of this year (1826) Count Mazzara informed his protégé that important business would render his presence in England necessary for some considerable time; and that, therefore, much to his regret, a separation must take place between them. He advised him to continue his studies under the same master from whom he had latterly been receiving instruction—namely, Federici; and for that purpose to follow the professor to Milan, whither he was proceeding, and establish himself there for a certain time, during which his wants would be amply provided for, as he would find a considerable

sum lodged there to his credit at the agents of the Count's banker.

Generous as this offer was, and wise and fortunate in the extreme as the measure taken in his behalf, it fell upon the happy and indulged foster-son of the Mazzaras like a heavy blow, nay, almost a calamity. It was the sudden rupture of a rosy chain of thoughtless, blissful hours, binding him to a home that was all brightness, and where he met nothing but tender care and affection. It was also the snapping of another flowery chain—so, at least, it has been whispered—softly attaching, it may be all unconsciously to himself, the impressionable young man to another inmate of the palace, whose presence at his first interview with the Countess has already been noticed; and to whose heart, perhaps, the wonderful resemblance which had taken by storm the mother's bosom might have won him too easy admission.

At any rate, the motives were, no doubt, strong that induced the Count to take a step which, but for some such hidden reason, does not appear to have been so absolutely necessary. The pang was, it must be imagined, a severe one; but the abundant and paternal kindness of the Count, in providing for the future welfare of Balfe, went far to mitigate the acuteness of his present grief. Moreover, he was

made of sterner stuff than to whine or pine over an unavoidable upset along a road that had been, perhaps, a little too smooth and pleasant to last; and his breezy, elastic spirit had soon blown away the clouds of despondency, and opened up the blue sky of hope and cheerful exertion.

The Count accompanied Balfe as far as Milan; having provided him with a number of useful and agreeable introductions to residents in the city, and seen to the pecuniary arrangements which were to render the young student's life not only free from sordid cares, but easy and even luxurious, so uncalculating in his munificence was this heaven-provided patron. The two parted not without all the prudent and solicitous advice, and even the blessing, of a father on the one hand, and all the expression of warm thankfulness and respectful deference that might be expected from the most dutiful son on the other. The parting was an impressive one on both sides, there can be no doubt; for the Count, who had played so fatherly a part towards young Balfe, could not but have felt some natural anxiety in leaving him now altogether to his own guidance in the midst of not a few perils, and at the very age when temptations of every kind exert their strongest influence. While Balfe, now called upon once more in a foreign land, and

among, with one or two exceptions, entire strangers, to fight the hard battle of an artist's life with no protector or counsellor immediately at hand to fly to at the moment of difficulty, must have had need of all his natural courage, his determined self-reliance, and, above all, that irrepressible buoyancy which never abandoned him.

The good luck that was never far off from him, even when the prospect was least promising, had, however, travelled with him on his gloomy journey to Milan, and, in fact, was the guiding spirit of the expedition—for in Milan he was to make his maiden attempt at dramatic composition, and so lay the foundation of his subsequent career. Among the letters of introduction given him by the Count was one for Glossop, an English impressario, who, with national hardihood, had taken upon himself the Atlantean burthen of managing two of the largest and most important operatic theatres of Italy—viz., La Scala in Milan, and San Carlo in Naples. Not being corporeally divisible, his personal presence was bestowed at that time on the Milanese establishment, his spiritual guidance only being allotted to the Neapolitan. To have held such a position does not necessarily imply corresponding ability. To judge from examples under our own eyes it rather infers

the incapacity to manage one theatre properly, that is prosperously — interchangeable terms in matters managerial. But no doubt Glossop had acquired a reputation for his practical sense, which generally means impracticable insensibility to everything but the accomplished fact, the ready-made success. So, though he was very polite and even hospitably kind to young Balfe, in virtue of the letter of introduction from an Italian Count, when told by the aspiring musician's professor and instructor Federici how full of talent and how already profoundly skilled his pupil was, and how desirable it would be for the manager to afford an opportunity for this rising capacity to produce itself to the light where only it could grow and mature itself, with practical sense, Glossop muttered something about England, shook his head, and said nothing ever came from there—he meant from England.

At last there came an hour—one of those hours when, according to the Latin proverb, even wise men can forget their wisdom and mighty managers their practical sense. Where would the world be but for these providential intervals of inspired idiocy in its enlightened governors ex-officio? Federici had arranged to have some of Balfe's compositions executed at the Conservatoire, and, meeting Glossop

in yielding humour, had persuaded him to attend the performance. The result was that the manager became convinced that for once, in deciding before making himself acquainted with the thing to be decided on, he had been hasty. There was stuff in the young man notwithstanding his birthplace, and the unfortunate fact that he was unknown, and therefore not stamped with the hall-mark of success. So thought the colossal Glossop, astride on his two theatres—not a comfortable attitude for thinking by the way—who happened to be in want of musical "stuff" to help off some "stuff" of his own concoction in the shape of a grand ballet on the subject of "La Pérouse," which, with the assistance of Barrymore, another Englishman by the way, but already celebrated as a scene painter and theatrical mechanist, he was about to bring forth.

The young composer became consequently the object of fresh attention, and the production of the entire music for the new work was placed in his hands, with a result which not only proved Balfe's decidedly inventive talent and already competent knowledge of the science of composition, but brought to light his wonderful facility and power of work in the astonishing quickness with which piece after piece was thrown off. The rehearsals

having shown that the music was all that could be desired in its adaptation to the dramatic and choregraphic exigences of author and ballet-master, "La Pérouse" was duly produced, and had the good fortune to please the fastidious judgment of the Milanese, who have, like the Parisians, in their own conceit a sort of Sir Hubert Stanley reputation for the value of their approval — "Success at La Scala is success indeed!" No doubt in the eyes of the ambitious young man its current worth exceeded even this artificial and exaggerated value, and a glorious prospective of future success opened before his imagination. Whether Balfe used any of this music again subsequently does not appear, but two pieces were especially selected for praise by the cognoscenti, as well as the general public—viz., the overture and a symphony descriptive of a storm and shipwreck.

The career of a composer seemed now quite naturally to open itself before the young *maestro*, and the thirst for distinction beginning to parch his ardent lips, was only increased by this sprinkling of success. Balfe longed for another opportunity again of challenging the verdict of the tribunal that had once pronounced in his favour. But the Fates were better advised than he, and interposed their veto to an application for a new trial when the cause was won, by

withholding the necessary libretto, that *sine quâ non*, the absence of which so often delays the outburst of aspiring genius in the field of operatic composition.

An opera book is not easy to be had under any circumstances; and those who can furnish the commodity refuse to run the risk attending the early attempts of young composers, and require immediate payment for their manuscripts; an antecedent condition generally very difficult of fulfilment, for rarely are genius and wealth associated in the beginning. Balfe being entirely dependent on the bounty of another for subsistence, was not in a position, therefore, to remove this obstacle to his further progress by a resort to his own purse; and this time chance did not intercede in his favour, by dropping a ready-written manuscript at his door. Perhaps an appeal to his patron might have succeeded; but the young man was, no doubt, already by this time feeling that, as there was ere long to be a time when he must rely upon himself alone, the sooner he threw off all ties of dependence the better. Obligations impose restraint, and freedom was the passion of Balfe's soul. Accordingly he bethought him now more seriously than ever of his baritone voice, and his turn for the stage as a source of livelihood. To thrive as an interpreter of other men's works, or starve as a producer

of his own, were the two roads which trended away before him, and he chose the pleasantest. Rossini had to decide between the same alternatives at much the same age, and had the courage or *insouciance* to choose the rougher road. But young Rossini had, after his first public success, received a small appointment; and, moreover, he was better able among his own countrymen to maintain himself, in however small a way, until the fortunate opportunity should present itself when he might show the world what was in him.

Balfe had been steadily preparing himself for the venture he was now determined on with more earnest intentions than when he took his theatrical trip to Norwich under the auspices of Crook, the manager. Filippo Galli, a celebrated basso-singer of that day, for whom, by the way, the great Italian *maestro* just mentioned had written the part of Assur, that of the father in "La Gazza Ladra," and other parts of no less weight, was then at Milan; and under him Balfe had been studying assiduously, with a view to making his first appearance at La Scala on the first likely opening that presented itself; Glossop having this time made no difficulty in offering the desired facilities to one in whom he now had faith. But, alas! before the desired occasion presented itself Glossop's

managerial affairs had taken an unhappy turn. The misdirection of two theatres was egregiously more unprosperous than that of one; mathematically speaking, it was as the square of the distance between Milan and Naples. The colossal Glossop had to come down from his twofold pedestal, and endeavour to balance himself and his accounts on one, and Milan was the port he abandoned. This crash broke up the plans which Balfe had flattered himself were so near fulfilment. The proverbial interstitial slip of the cup had occurred; and probably the suddenness and bitterness of the disappointment had robbed Italy of all the attractive charms she had worn only a year before in the eyes of the enthusiastic and ambitious protégé of Count Mazzara. He had awakened now from the last of the dreams with which the home of Art and the chosen land of love had lulled and beguiled his heart and spirit, and he longed for his own natural home. Bidding adieu to such friends as he had at Milan, he turned his face towards Paris on his way to England; and, with another chapter, commences a new and eventful stage of Balfe's life-journey.

CHAPTER IX.

THE preceding chapter ends with the announcement, that in this is to open a new and eventful stage of Balfe's journey through life; but it is preferable and truer to call the small portion of this memoir relating to the period when he was induced by a recklessly active temper, and the *auri sacra fames*, to adopt the profession of a singer and actor—while yet his real vocation was abiding time and opportunity to declare itself—an episode—an amusing, highly characteristic, and in every and any sense eventful episode; but still, regarding this as an account of the mutual development of Balfe the man and Balfe the composer, an offshoot from the main trunk, though ever so laden with blossom and fruit peculiar to itself.

On reaching Paris, merely, as in his heart he imagined, on his way to England, Balfe once more discovered that he was as it were sailing under sealed

orders from above, and that destiny had another course for him to pursue than that he had deemed himself bent on. The friendly invitation to hunt up the kind old professor, who had, on his first sojourn in Paris, given him such encouragement to proceed in his studies as a composer, occurring to his mind, he visited Cherubini, who, hearing from him of the desire he now had to produce himself as a baritone, led him to the piano, and asked for a specimen of his abilities in that direction. After listening to him with an expression of benevolent approval, Cherubini decided that there was so much ground for Balfe's present ambition that he had better make up his mind to remain in Paris, for that in London he would probably be lost in an unsuccessful struggle. "Apropos," he suddenly exclaimed, "Rossini dines with me to-morrow—come, and I will present you to the great man, who is now all-powerful and can put you on the way to fortune." Setting aside all motives of personal interest, the prospect of dining with one whom Balfe regarded almost in the light of a divinity, and towards whom he felt himself secretly drawn by the ties of melodious kinship, was embraced with eager delight. Rossini's official position in Paris at this time is sometimes spoken of as the Directorship of the Italian opera. It was not so; that post had been offered to

him, but was prudently refused. *Il ne voulait déranger personne.* The office he actually held was that of Inspecteur-Général du Chant de France, created purposely for him that he might make no enemies by displacing or disappointing any one; and for which he was paid 20,000 francs a year. This by the way.

The next day came, and the dinner which was to bring together for the first time Rossini and his idolatrous admirer, and subsequent friend and grateful protégé, came off. Rossini was accompanied by the lady who was then Madame Rossini, the celebrated Colbrand, one of the greatest singers and beauties of her day, and who was once honoured while in Venice with a bouquet and a copy of verses from the hand of Lord Byron. Colbrand had contributed to the enhancement of Rossini's early fame, and in return he wrote for her the part of Rosina in the "Barber of Seville," which was originally composed in a key suited to her voice,—a mezzo-soprano approaching to a contralto. After dinner, the great composer and ex-prima donna sang duets, Rossini accompanying, to the intense enjoyment of Balfe, who was then asked to sing something himself; whereupon he bravely sat down at the piano, and accompanied himself in "Largo al Factotum" with such satisfactory effect that Rossini is said to have declared that, till then

he had thought none had been able to play and sing that difficult song but himself. The impression made in short by this exhibition of Balfe's capabilities on both Cherubini and Rossini was such, that the latter offered at once to procure him an engagement at the Italiens, if he would consent to place himself under the tuition of Bordogni, and study with that master for twelve months. It was not likely that there would have been any hesitation on Balfe's part in gladly acceding to such a proposal, but there arose again the question of ways and means. How were Bordogni's lessons to be paid for; and how was his pupil to exist for the twelve months required? Who was to feed the steed while the grass was growing? The first difficulty was removed by the original propounder of the twofold problem, Rossini, who very kindly furnished Balfe with a letter to Bordogni, which, in the then mutual position of the two Italians, was as good as a royal command. As to the second horn of the dilemma, it was transformed into a horn of plenty by the appearance—for the second time in Balfe's nonage, as we have seen, exactly at the desired moment—of a good genius, with a purse well lined, in the person of a M. Galois, a man of finance and something more—a generous heart, and music in his soul. This gentleman had heard Balfe sing at

Cherubini's house, was delighted with the signs then manifested of the possession of unusual abilities by the young Englishman, and hearing how the case stood with him—namely, that a promise so brilliant of future eminence was in danger of being untimely nipped by the financial thermometer's position at zero, without hesitation offered to allocate ten thousand francs for the purpose of maintaining Balfe during the period of his preparation for the Italian operatic stage, under the teaching of Bordogni. This handsome endowment was to be advanced by monthly instalments of one thousand francs.

The immediate intention of these zealous friends and coadjutors—and no man could have kinder, wiser, or more competent—was that he should succeed to the celebrated Pellegrini, who had been the great baritone of his day. Accordingly, Balfe having worked under his new instructor with all the ardour and zeal inspired by the fact that Bordogni entertained the greatest hopes of his pupil, whose voice, though not, as before noted, of any considerable power or volume, was extended in compass, of mellow quality, and remarkable flexibility. Moreover the inborn musical aptitude of Balfe returned richly the cultivation of the skilful teacher, who was so captivated by the extremely docile and malleable nature with which he

had to deal, as to have composed, so it is said, a set of vocal exercises especially for Balfe's training, and these subsequently formed the great bulk of the *Solfeggio* published by him, and for a long time the mainstay of his great reputation.

Ere the twelve months prescribed for his probation had expired, the aspirant was pronounced ripe for production, and a début being procured for him by the intervention of Rossini, Balfe chose for his first public essay as a baritone the part of Figaro in "Il Barbiere," in the teeth of the vivid and profound impression left in the memory of his hearers by his predecessor, Pellegrini. But it was ever Balfe's temperament thus to take the bull by the horns, and the result proved he had not over-estimated his ability to satisfy the taste and exigences of his audience. His success within the measure of the circumstances was a triumph. That he was no Triton among the minnows, the following cast will show:—

Rosina . . .	Mdlle. Sontag.
Bertha . . .	Mdlle. Amigo.
Almaviva . .	Sig. Bordogni.
Bartolo . . .	Sig. Graziani.
Basilio . . .	Sig. Levasseur.
Figaro . . .	Mr. Balfe.

To have held his own in such company, to so

satisfactory an effect that the opera was repeated nine times, denotes how completely Balfe had justified the expectations of his professor. But the crucial test of all, and the most flattering to an artist's feelings, insomuch as it implies success in the most emphatic sense, while it translates it in a universal language, was that Laurent, the manager at that time of Les Italiens, offered him, after the third night, through the mouthpiece of Rossini, an engagement for three years, on the very acceptable terms of 15,000 francs for the first, 20,000 francs for the second, and 25,000 francs for the third year.

This was Eldorado and Mount Olympus in conjunction; and Balfe, jumping at the arrangement, became, and continued for the period fixed, chief baritone of the Italian Opera at Paris. Among the parts he appeared in subsequently, in course of the due fulfilment of his engagement, may be especially mentioned that of Dandini, in "La Cenerentola," for the sake of citing the names of the singers by the side of whom he had the honour of figuring. Malibran was the Cenerentola; Mdlles. Blasis and Amigo, the Two Sisters; Donzelli, the Prince; Zucchelli, the Baron; and Levasseur, Alidoro: a cast that has probably never been equalled from that day to this. During this engagement

Balfe also played Don Giovanni, the Podesta in "La Gazza Ladra;" and Beltona in "L'Inganno Felice."

But in following out thus with characteristic spirit and energy the only path that seemed at that period to offer immediate satisfaction to his thirst for fame on the one hand, and his need of money on the other, while it still kept him within his native element—Music—Balfe was not forgetful of the higher goal to which he had once aspired, and on which, in his heart, he was still fervently bent. Accordingly, he pursued his studies under the guidance of Cherubini; and continued, by his earnest devotion to the scientific part of his purposed vocation, to lay the foundation of that sound knowledge of his art, derived from a study of the greatest masters of all periods, which was so serviceable to him in putting into available form and expression, with such marvellous rapidity, the abundance of his melodic inspirations; although it was the very facility so acquired, as the result of laborious study, which afforded those who had an interest in detracting from his merits a specious ground for the accusation of shallowness and ignorance.

Rossini, although he had forwarded so effectively Balfe's project of making himself an efficient baritone

singer, was not ignorant of the extent of his knowledge and skill as a composer, nor of his gift of melody; and he constantly urged him to continue his labours in that direction, prophesying for him, with great confidence, ultimate fame both on the Continent and in his own country; though in the latter case slowly, and with grudging acknowledgment, as became a native prophet. A very significant proof in what high estimation his talent as a composer was already held by the great *maestro* at this time, is afforded in the fact, that having been asked by the director of the Italian Opera to furnish some new concerted pieces for interpolation into Zingarelli's "Romeo è Giuletta," about to be produced, with Malibran as Romeo, Rossini declined the task himself, but recommended that it should be confided to Balfe. Thus was he supplied, in a very unexpected manner, with the opportunity he had hitherto longed for in vain, of showing his powers as a vocal and dramatic composer. The work now required of him comprised an overture, two choruses, a scena for Malibran, and a cavatina and aria for Mdlle. Blasis, the Giulietta. Balfe acquitted himself of this important and delicate undertaking with a degree of success which augured happily for the future.

In a short time he received, in signal proof that

he had not wasted his sweetness on the desert air, a libretto from the director of the Grand Opera, the subject of which was drawn from "Atala," the well-known tale by Châteaubriand. Balfe applied himself to the work before him with such a degree of persevering industry and an intensity of devotion, that his health began to suffer, and he was urged by his doctor to proceed at once to Italy. Short as the period was that he had then been at work, a great part of the opera had been composed; and before his departure M. Gallois, Balfe's Mecænas, arranged a *matinée*, that the pieces already completed might be heard by an assembly composed of the chief amateurs and professors of the day. The singers to whom "Atala" was to be confided comprised Malibran, Adolphe Nourrit, who afterwards destroyed himself in Naples, Alexis Dupont, and Levasseur. Fortunate, indeed, was the young composer to meet with such interpreters of his first essays; and the handsome compliments he received on all hands on the merits of his work so far were an additional incentive, if any were needed, to show himself worthy the occasion.*

* Balfe entrusted to a friend and a patron—a nobleman and himself an amateur composer—the score of "Atala." On his return, friend, score, and all had disappeared. It is easy to imagine his dismay and disappointment. In the words of the song, afterwards so beautifully set by him—perhaps because inspired by this very reminiscence—he had thus shot a whole quiver full of arrows into the air, but he never found

Thus encouraged, Balfe packed up his unfinished score and booked his place in a diligence proceeding towards Italy. At the moment of starting, and as he had nestled himself cosily in his place, up drove a cabriolet in galloping haste, whence alighted a gentleman perfectly unknown, who placed a packet in Balfe's hand, with the request that he should not open it till he had reached the next relay. Balfe muttered acquiescence, but curiosity prevailed over principle, and the mysterious stranger had scarcely turned his back before the envelope was torn open and disclosed a bank post bill for 1000 francs, accompanied by a few words to the effect that the writer had been so charmed with the examples he had heard at M. Gallois' entertainment of Balfe's talents, that he was anxious to serve the young

them again either in the heart or portmanteau of his unfaithful friend. The fuss that was publicly made over the missing opera was effectual in preventing any dishonest use being made of it, should the loss have been, as it was suspected, not entirely accidental. Not so much did Balfe regret the loss of his opera, which as an early work was probably much surpassed by subsequent productions, but with this score were included in the deposit the entire collection of the instrumental compositions and pieces for the violin he had written as studies and exercises while under the tuition of Federici and Cherubini, and the loss of these were to him a source of poignant regret, in which the disinterested admirers of the composer will sadly join; for not only would they have been curious and valuable in themselves as the first outpourings of his tuneful spirit, but they would have afforded incontestable evidence of the serious nature and extent of the studies by which he had prepared himself for his career as a composer.

composer, and trusted the enclosed would be found useful.

Considering the state of his exchequer at the time, this was one of those opportune interventions of his guardian genius to which, as we have seen, Balfe was not unaccustomed, and which implied quite as much of future danger as of present felicity, inasmuch as it was a terrible temptation to the young Irishman to consider himself "born to good luck." On this occasion, however, the invisible power—if such there were in the matter—that behaved so generously to young Balfe, took care to enforce, at the same time, the healthy moral of "be just before you are generous." There came a second stranger before the diligence had got under way, with a second missive—this time to be opened at once. It contained a bill for 670 francs, an unsettled score the composer was leaving behind him. Balfe tendered at once his cloud-dropped bank bill, and received the change, pocketing which, he still found himself richer than when he started, not only by 330 francs, but by that inestimable possession, a receipt in full for a just debt. In the delicious frame of mind so induced did Balfe once more turn his face towards Italy—not as before, feeding on dreams and empty purposes, but with a progeny of deeds giving hostages to fortune.

CHAPTER X.

NATURALLY enough, it was to Milan that Balfe betook himself in the first place; for there he was already a known personage. Moreover, Rossini had, with practical forethought, supplied his young brother in art with a letter of recommendation to an Italian nobleman of great influence in that city, the Count San Antonio, afterwards Duke of Canizzaro, and through his intercession Balfe obtained an engagement as *primo baritono* for the opera at Palermo, then under the management of Count Sommatino. On his way to the Sicilian capital Balfe thought he would take the occasion to pay a visit to his early patron, Count Mazzara, at Rome; but previously he resolved to renew a pleasant acquaintance he had made while in Paris with a Bolognese amateur musician and composer, the Marquis of Sampieri, at that time making a stay in his native city. Accordingly, for Bologna he started, and was there cordially welcomed

by the Marquis, who insisted that Balfe should take up his quarters at his palazzo so long as he remained.

The very first night after his arrival, Balfe was carried off by his host to the palazzo of another noble personage, Prince Bacchiocchi, husband of the celebrated sister of the first Napoleon, who was giving a grand ball. Here, for the first time, Balfe became acquainted with one who was soon after to commence her long and potent reign as one of the queens of song—Giuletta Grisi. She was then only seventeen, and, as may be imagined, that beauty, the beams of which lingered and lent a charm to her face long after the sun of its glory had set, was at its loveliest. The impression produced by her charms, unadorned save by a single white rose in her hair, on Balfe's susceptible temperament was often dwelt on by him with rapture, and when he was asked to sing his favourite "Largo al Factotum," her presence close to his chair he described as acting like an inspiration and causing him to sing better than he had ever sung before or since.

While enjoying the hospitality of the Palazzo Sampieri, the young composer celebrated the Marquis's birthday by a cantata, written for the occasion, the principal parts of which were sung by Mdlle. Grisi and Signori Tadolini and Pedrazzi. The success of

this composition was of so marked a character that the Philharmonic Society of Bologna presented Balfe with a diploma of honorary associate; while, on the other hand, his social qualifications gained him admittance to the Casino dei Nobili with the privilege of a life membership. How mightily these enchanting first fruits of a popularity which was thenceforth never to wane, acted upon the faculty of enjoyment ever possessed by Balfe in the highest intensity, may be measured by the total oblivion it wrought of all besides the actual all-absorbing present.

Lotus-eating must be carried on, however, in the land thereto appropriated by poets. Anywhere else it is accompanied by inconveniences, and visited with more or less terrible consequences on the consumer. The long afternoon is inevitably followed by a morning, when the awakened lotus-eater has to give an account of his mental and sometimes corporeal absence. In the midst of his multiplied felicities under the roof of the Palazzo Sampieri, Balfe's engagement at Palermo had been totally forgotten. When it flashed upon him the date of his required presence, as per contract, had arrived, and he had to rush to Sicily with the certainty of having committed a breach of his articles of engagement which might be visited by heavy penalties. Such things abroad are matters of State

importance, and negligent or recalcitrant artists, once enrolled in the public service, have no alternative but to play or go to prison "without the option of a fine."

Fortunately for Balfe he had been playing truant for the benefit of those who could help him. The Duke of Canizzaro had given him a letter for the Princess of Cataldo, a person of influence in Palermo, and through her kindness he was enabled to meet the Count Sommatino, against whose directorship he had been guilty of high treason, side by side at her dinner table. Balfe told his story with that total frankness which disarms the sternest judge, and the offended director being thus personally appealed to, promised his intercession with the supreme powers. Lucky it was that he did so, or the defaulting baritone would have certainly seen the inside of a Sicilian prison, for he had been denounced to the police, who had orders to watch his movements.

This little cloud blown over, a burst of sunshine gleamed over Balfe's début before the Palermitan public, which took place under circumstances of unusual brilliancy and notoriety. The character he had selected for the occasion was Valdeburgho in "La Straniera," and Bellini being a native of that city and held in esteem accordingly, the theatre was crowded from this cause alone. Then it was the first

day of January (1830), which, being the birthday of the King of Naples, the Viceroy attended the opera in State. So far Balfe was fortunate in securing an audience of more than ordinary distinction, and as he happened to please, his success was the more telling. How much to the taste of his audience his acting and singing were found might, however, have remained a comparative mystery to him at the time, and that from the same fortunate circumstance which gave additional importance to the event.

Etiquette forbids all outward tokens of approbation on these State occasions when once the Court have taken their places. Accordingly the first act passed off without a sound of applause, and but for that unmistakable magnetism which reveals the temper of an audience to the susceptible artist, Balfe might have believed he was making a *fiasco*, when, after Valdeburgho's beautiful air in the second act, sung by him with all the sympathetic feeling and expression of a true and accomplished musician, the admiration of his hearers broke into audible murmurs, which, at a signal from the Viceroy, burst out into loud and unanimous shouts for its repetition. The seal was thus set upon Balfe's success officially, as it were, and the public ratified the solemn act by flocking to hear the new baritone; and this one part, the opera being

repeated seventy nights, carried him nearly to the end of his engagement.

But before Balfe took leave of Palermo he was destined, by the influence of his lucky star, to make himself known as a composer, and one who could serve a manager at a pinch—best of all reputations! Count Sommatino, his present director, had come to loggerheads with his chorus on a question of increase of pay. In fact, that now somewhat too familiar incident a strike was organized among them, and if a chorus is as unanimous off as on the stage, their combinations must be invincible. The Count indeed felt himself in their hands, when he exclaimed in Balfe's presence, "Oh, if I had but one more opera without a chorus, I should serve those scoundrels out. Unfortunately, 'Il Matrimonio Segreto' and 'L'Inganno Felice' will only carry me over a few nights more." Thereupon, "Give me twenty days," said Balfe, "and I'll write you an opera such as you desire." The offer was accepted, and the poet of the establishment was called into consultation as to the production of the necessary libretto. A French vaudeville, "Les Rivaux d'eux mêmes," suggested itself—probably Balfe had seen it in Paris—and was quickly converted into an opera under the title, "I Rivali di se Stessi." Poet and composer heartily and harmoniously

working together, at the end of twenty days their task was accomplished, and the result of their labours proving perfectly successful, the machinations of the discontented chorus were signally defeated. It is characteristic of Balfe's modesty that he had not thought of writing himself a part in the new opera, which was principally sustained by Mdlle. Liparini and Signori Boccacini and Scalesi.

At the close of his Palermo engagement, still pursuing earnestly his adopted vocation, Balfe proceeded to Piacenza, sang there for a period, and went on to Bergamo, where good fortune was awaiting him in a new guise. It was on joining the operatic company then engaged at Bergamo, that Balfe was destined to meet, in its prima donna—Mdlle. Lina Roser—the loving, faithful wife, who was thenceforth visibly to personify, in her amiable presence and the tangible evidence of never-ending marks of tender solicitude, that good genius which had hitherto watched over him unseen, and guided his steps so unerringly to his good, until now it had led them to one in whom he would find, from that time to the end of his life, in all things and always, so efficient an earthly substitute.

Balfe's stay in Bergamo was not long, as he was called to fulfil an engagement at Pavia, where Rossini's "Mosé in Egitto" was about to be pro-

duced. The part of Pharaoh was that which legitimately fell to him; but another was, shortly after his arrival, somewhat unexpectedly assigned him.

The circumstance befel in this wise. The *maestro* to whose superintendence the production of the opera had, in due discharge of his functions, been committed, broke down in the task from age and incompetency combined, and the municipal authorities, relying on Balfe's known musical abilities, had transferred into his hands the guidance of the rehearsals.

The displaced conductor, during the preparatory proceedings from which he had been excluded, displayed his annoyance at the usurpation of his office by Balfe in a thousand petty interferences and protests at what was going on, such as mortified incapacity is accustomed to indulge. The violins in the orchestra had been remonstrated with by Balfe for their execution of a particular passage which he required to be played in a certain manner, insisting on its repetition until the proper rendering was given. Thereupon Rolla, so the dethroned *maestro* was named—he had a highly distinguished brother, Alessandro, leader at La Scala—exclaimed, with indignant emphasis, that the passage was no violin passage at all, lying beyond the capabilities of the instrument. "Not a violin passage!" retorted Balfe; "Rossini

was a violin player himself, and knew what he was about." This only increased the ire of the conductor, who ironically invited the singer to try his hand on the fiddle. "Signor Dottore, venite qui, suonate per me, ed io anderò cantare per voi." An invitation which Balfe summarily obeyed, and snatching up a violin, played the passage off with such triumphant ease as to extort the applause of band, chorus, and singers. It was hard certainly to withstand so tempting an opportunity of indicating an argument and demolishing an opponent. Alas! the opponent was only too effectively demolished. Poor Rolla slunk away from the scene of his discomfiture as hastily as he might; took to his bed; and died of the bitterness of proven incapacity. Could he have foreseen such a result, Balfe would have been content that this poor piece of inflated humanity should have enjoyed *his* collapse rather than perish of his own. At Pavia the young composer, the fame of whose abilities was gradually spreading, was once again called on to exercise his creative faculties, and produced his opera "Un Avertimento ai Gelosi" for his own benefit with marked success. It may be noted that by this early work of Balfe was furnished the occasion for the second appearance on any stage of another future celebrity—the renowned Ronconi.

The facility with which musical talent of any real mark was at that day received in Italy—however it may be since—and a way opened for its onward progress, is denoted in the fact that Balfe, after these two first successful efforts, was shortly permitted to bring out a third opera at La Scala in Milan, one of the two chief arenas of the country, and holding the place one of our two metropolitan patent theatres would have held of old in the dramatic world. Intrigues and cabals have their existence, no doubt, and prevail for a time in excluding from the public notice those who have as yet contested claims for a hearing; but the strong interest, amounting indeed to enthusiasm, felt among the people at large in all forms of music, more especially operatic, insures eventual victory over the busiest and most persistent obstructiveness.

The subject of Balfe's third opera is indicated in its title, "Enrico Quarto al passo della Marno." In it the melodious flow, dramatic spirit, feeling for characteristic colour, and facile skill of composition which earned for him his subsequent fame, were already conspicuous, and the work rapidly established itself as a favourite throughout Italy. The profits, however, of a rising composer are by no means commensurate with the amount of fame of which he may be laying the foundation; and not for some time to

come were the prospects of maintaining himself, and supporting those dependent on him from his pen alone, sufficiently clear to enable him to throw aside the emoluments to be derived from his artistic exertions.

While still staying at Milan, after the production of his "Enrico," Malibran, whom he had known in Paris, had accepted an engagement to sing at La Scala, on the—in those days—fabulous terms of 3000 francs per night, be it said by the way, and meeting Balfe, was profuse in her expressions of admiration for his latest production, adding a hope—how prophetically neither at that time knew—that she might one day sing in an opera of his in London. In the meantime, the celebrated cantatrice showed in a more practical manner her interest in the welfare of the young musician, by prevailing on the manager of La Scala to engage him in the place of the baritono actually in possession of that *emploi*, and with whose efficiency the great songstress was dissatisfied. In consequence of this arrangement, Balfe, descending once more to the buskin, found himself so far honoured in that position that he sustained successively the characters of Iago, Dandini, and Figaro, when Malibran was singing respectively as Desdemona, Cenerentola, and Rosina. How well he acquitted himself

in his artistic capacity is demonstrated in the sequel of Balfe's theatrical history, inasmuch as he is next to be found at the Fenice in Venice, still singing in conjunction with Malibran.

During his sojourn in Venice, another occasion offered itself for the exercise of his legitimate and true vocation, and he was entrusted with a libretto on the subject of "Hamlet," in which the character of Ophelia was to have had Malibran for its representative, and that of the Prince the famed Donzelli. This work, which would have afforded such a test of the extent of Balfe's creative powers, their earnestness and solidity, as no subsequent opportunity ever presented in the same degree, was never destined to be completed. The arrangements made for its production were suddenly brought to a close by the death of the Emperor of Austria, and so was lost to the world, if not a masterpiece worthy of so high a theme, such an evidence of the grasp and maturity of Balfe's talent, at that early period, as would have been curious now to study; while, at any rate, an Englishman's treatment of the great English poet's immortal creation would have been forthcoming, to place in comparison with the entirely national conception of the French composer who has attempted the same task.

Though forming no part of Balfe's personal expe-

riences, an incident in the operatic world of Venice—at this time arising as a consequence of the same event which untimely nipped the projected opera in the embryo—may be recorded here as a curiosity in the annals of the Italian lyrical stage, and a mark of the fanaticism of Italian musical audiences. A certain impressario—one Gallo—had erected a new theatre, roofed in with glass, and expended in the venture his entire fortune. The death of the Emperor befel ere the speculation could be inaugurated, and now its future was hopeless, and the manager must be a bankrupt, unless something could be done to give an adventitious éclat to its opening. The despairing Gallo had recourse to Malibran, who consented to sing for one night. The opera was the "Sonnambula," and the new theatre was filled to the remotest corners. At the conclusion of the *rondo finale*, "Ah! non giunge," Malibran's foot slipping, as she accidentally trod on a detached leaf from one of the bouquets at her feet, the singer would have fallen but for Balfe—the Rudolfo of the occasion—who caught her in his arms. In the struggle of recovery, however, one of Amina's slippers was suddenly disengaged and found its way into the pit. A scramble ensued, which amidst so large an assembly must have offered a scene of fearful tumult, in which even those sitting in the

boxes became involved in the anxiety to seize a morsel of the object that had touched the foot of the divine artiste, as a prized relic. Never was the game of "hunt the slipper" played before on so gigantic a scale. Malibran, partly delighted at this amusing display of the public adulation, and partly to prevent a probable catastrophe by effecting a diversion, cast her remaining slipper in another direction, and the uproar was thus prolonged with renewed violence. Not till Amina had seen her slippers, more worshipped than even the Pope's, reduced to shreds and patches —each a treasured memento—was the tempest appeased. The manager then walked on, threading his way through a maze of bouquets, and leading forward the heroine of the evening, announced in terms of the deepest gratitude that she had saved him from ruin, and that henceforth the new theatre should bear the title of "Teatro Malibran," which it does to this day.

It may be regarded as certain that—content as Balfe might be at this time with the position he had so rapidly gained as a singer on the Italian stage, where competition was so keen, the judges so exacting, and the competitors so well trained for the race—he made money, and his fame was growing daily; but such renown was not that which his soul coveted,

and no lucre could satisfy the cravings of his inner being. To work his way to the front ranks as a composer was the real ambition that possessed him, and kept him waking of nights; to be cited among the Webers, the Rossinis, the Aubers, even as he figured in the bills by the side of the Malibrans, Donzellis, and Sontags, was his absorbing thought; and above all, to obtain that recognition of the genius he felt within him from his own countrymen which to the masters aforesaid was accorded respectively by Germans, Italians, and Frenchmen. Malibran, with whom he travelled, sharing her artistic toils and receiving from her generous nature and refined appreciation all the encouragement and sympathy a sister in art could give a brother, was not without knowing to the full the extent and energy of his aspirations, nor without sharing the desire to see them fulfilled no less in satisfaction of her womanly kindness than in justification of her oft-repeated prophecies. And when the time came, at the end of her Venetian engagement, that she had to proceed southward, while Balfe was called to Milan, ere they parted Malibran gave her comrade her solemn assurance that on her arrival in London, whither she was eventually bent, she would use her influence to procure the young composer an opportunity to bring his

talents before his countrymen, and that he should do so under her own brilliant auspices, as she would stipulate to appear herself in the work for which, through her, he should obtain an order.

This should have been enough to pacify Balfe, and induce him to abide in patience the occasion thus promised him to make his début under the most favourable circumstances. At Milan, however, he came across the well-known Signor Puzzi; who, besides horn-playing, in which he excelled, busied himself with agency and trafficked in engagements. This gentleman, in pursuit of the latter of his avocations, induced Balfe, by such specious representations as those of this trade know how to employ, to accompany him to London in the capacity of a public vocalist. They arrived at the commencement of the season, and through Puzzi's interest and connexions an opening was made for Balfe, first at the Ancient and Philharmonic Concerts, then, his capabilities becoming known and duly estimated, he sang in many various places, earning no doubt for himself, as well as his "agent," a handsome livelihood. However full might be his purse, nevertheless there was a void in poor Balfe's heart—speaking of him as a composer—that ached to be filled; and now that he was in the midst of his own countrymen again, he

longed more ardently than ever that they should know in him no longer, as of erst, Master Balfe, the clever boy-violinist; nor, as now, Signor Balfe, the charming baritono, but as Michael William Balfe, the lyrical composer—the Auber, the Weber, ay, the Rossini of England. He could not wait for Malibran's promised intercession, and he beat about in all directions for an immediate opportunity to afford his countrymen a taste of his quality.

It soon presented itself. The Lyceum Theatre, under the direction of Mr. Arnold, was about to open as an English Opera House. The best singers available were engaged, and the manager was on the look-out for new material. Balfe offered himself, and set forth his ability to produce an opera in any style as per order. It was at first, of course, the old story of the untried man—untried, but condemned nevertheless. Not to be known, argues yourself unworthy to be known. However, Balfe was known—known to Malibran, to Giulia Grisi. These references startled the manager into further attention. Inquiries were made in the designated quarter, and the answer proved so eminently satisfactory, that a libretto was placed at the disposal of the aspiring composer, who pledged himself to produce the desired work in six weeks; and at the end of the term fixed was found

as good as his word. But now having reached the termination of what may be called Balfe's nonage, and his career as a composer being now about to commence in earnest, it is time to close this tenth chapter, and with it the first part of the present biographical sketch. To use an old simile—emerging from the comparatively obscure chrysalid state of half composer, half virtuoso, he will, in the second half, appear in all the varied brilliant colours of his native genius—free and untrammelled to wander according to his inspiration amid the unlimited fields and forests of melody and harmony.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

IT was another instance in this history of good fortune disguising herself in the garb of ill, that in the course of the rehearsals which Balfe's first English opera was undergoing, some disagreement occurred between Mr. Arnold and the young composer, which terminated in the withdrawal of the work. The cause of this difference seems to have been that the manager's financial resources beginning at that time to run short, he was unable to place the new opera upon the stage with that completeness and efficiency in the scenery and general mounting which Balfe's theatrical experience told him were of essential necessity to the success of his work. A shabby mise en scène to a new production is invariably taken as a sentence of condemnation passed on the work by the manager himself, and only too readily endorsed by

a public always glad to be saved the trouble of forming an opinion for itself. When Balfe determined to run no such unnecessary risks, he doubtless remembered Malibran's prophecy, that he would be "il Rossini Inglese," and thought it better probably to await patiently the fulfilment of the other part of her prediction, which it rested more on herself and her good wishes to insure—"Io ti farò scrivere un opera Inglese per me l'anno prossimo."

In the meanwhile, however, Balfe's destiny *more suo* took the matter into its own hands, and in settling the eventual disposal of the new opera employed the services of a personage of extreme potency in theatrical affairs at that date, but whose name will probably have only been saved from utter oblivion through its subsequent conjunction with that of the young man whom he at this time deigned to draw from obscurity, as he describes in a book of egotistical anecdotes on the stage, "before and behind the curtain." Mr. Mapleson, the librarian and copyist of the Lyceum, happening to call on the great Alfred Bunn, manager of Drury Lane Theatre through many years of alternate luck and disaster, was thus interpellated by the director: "What's that rubbish, Mapleson, they have been rehearsing at the English Opera House, and who is this Signor Balfe?" Thereupon Mr. Mapleson, an

excellent practical judge, descanted on the merits of the new composer, of whose work he had all the parts in his possession, and strongly recommended that Bunn should send for him, with a view to the production of what he had designated that "rubbish." Bunn, by the way, was the founder, or at any rate the direct progenitor of that present pestilent race of managers whose faith in rubbish as the only suitable nutriment for the public, whose judgment they rate beneath their own (an obvious impossibility), has brought the stage to its present condition. Accordingly, that it should deserve the qualification he had bestowed on it was no bar to its production, especially as the producer had been recommended by that infallible authority (on "rubbish") Tom Cooke, already referred to in this memoir.

The libretto on which Balfe had been working was furnished him by his friend Fitzball, whose melodramatic writings for the stage possess more merit than his lyrical poetry, though he wrote occasionally pretty words, as, for instance, "My Pretty Jane," and was to Balfe's subsequent literary collaborator Hyperion to a Satyr. At any rate he was a poet in feeling, and had some acquaintance with the rules of grammar, as well as some regard to the logical sequence of ideas. The opera, which was produced

October 29th, 1835, was entitled "The Siege of Rochelle," and if the subject (identical with that of "Linda di Chamouny") was not the most interesting nor the most dramatic in its treatment, and if the poetry deserved the very free condemnation it received at the hands of the critics of the day, which is more than doubtful, it afforded in its scope an opportunity for stringing together some very charming melodies and one or two concerted pieces of remarkable merit, and denoting the hand of a musician, which the public seized on with the avidity of long severance from food so delicious and fresh to the ear.

In proportion, however, with the public delight, expressed with that rebounding of enthusiasm which bursts all trammels of hesitation in a moment, and spreads itself like a torrent from town to town and province to province, till the echo comes back, after many days, from the most distant ends of the three kingdoms—in proportion to this harmonious chorus of general contentment, rose the strident voices of the disappointed and the incapable, with their surrounding cliques and their accredited organs, the "critics," who had not yet received the cue-word from the proprietors of the various sheets that contained their judgments—that cue-word being "success." Hear what Alfred Bunn says on the effect the popular recognition of

se quarters, in that
tes, in the usual self-
to light the man who
Lane when he, Bunn,
nark the graduated dis-

' writes Alfred Bunn, "as
country, to abuse a man
begin to denote a mental
he is surrounded by. In
Germany every species of encouragement is held out to a rising genius—in England he is subject to every possible detraction; and the
t burst upon the town it was
st unwarrantable attacks. Persons
ives musical judges were loud in their assertions that every note of 'The Siege of Rochelle' was stolen from Ricci's Opera of 'Chiara di Rosenberg;' and it was not until this last-named composition was produced by the Italian Buffo Company, under the spirited direction of Mr. Mitchell, that these self-constituted judges tardily and reluctantly admitted that there were not half-a-dozen bars in the two operas that bore the slightest resemblance to each other."

Having quoted the manager's account of Balfe's

cavilling reception b
day, it will be refres
which his collaborator
ball, gives in his pub
"Thirty-five Years of
refreshing for the genial
disquieted dulness and pe
picture it presents of the
on the genuine public.

"It was a glorious night,"
first night of 'The Siege of Rochelle'—one to
your whole life long the first night of a new play or
a new opera. The cram there was, the fashion the
delicious music, the enthusiastic
encores—never had I witnessed
'Vive le Roi,' 'Lo, the early beams of
'When I beheld the anchor weighed,' were especial
marks for approbation, and had an immense sale at
the publishers, then Addison and Beale, in Regent
Street. The applause was so unanimous, so *really applause*—for those who understand it can always tell
the real approval from the *claqueur*—no knocking
behind slips by box-keepers . . . . . So carried away
were even persons of the highest consequence by the
enthusiasm created by this beautiful music (thought by
many still to be Balfe's best composition), that people

bent over and nearly threw themselves from the side-boxes next to the orchestra to congratulate and shake hands with the young composer. They crowned him with a wreath of flowers; and I question, amid all the numerous and brilliant successes of this great artist, if he ever felt such a delighted heart as on the first night of 'The Siege of Rochelle.' It ran nearly the whole season; and the first time her present Gracious Majesty went in state to the theatre, it was to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, 'The Siege of Rochelle' being performed by *special desire*. There is a celebrated portrait of her Majesty, by Paris, seated in the box."

Mr. Bunn attributes the great run (for those days) of the new opera—seventy nights—to its conjunction in the bills with "The Jewess," an adaptation by Planché of Scribe's libretto to Halévy's opera "La Juive," adorned by spectacular effects and gorgeous processions, which marched round the circuit of the pit on an elevated platform, in successive cycles of ever-identical supers. On this point it is curious to note the rivalry of modesty between Planché—who in his "Recollections" gracefully connects the success and long attraction of his drama with the popularity of "The Siege of Rochelle"—and Fitzball, who says it would be unfair not to state that the success of the

opera was accelerated in being "bolstered up" by the "splendid translation" of "The Jewess."

Very well indeed had Planché done his work, as the present writer is old enough to remember, and great was the expense gone to in banners and costumes—not always so correct as the erudite Somerset Herald would have desired; but it is difficult to believe that all this did not rather tend to mar than help the impression of Balfe's music upon the town. Undoubtedly it was not the tawdry and bewildering spectacle, nor even the fine acting of Ellen Tree and Vandenhoff in "The Jewess," that caused the melodies of "The Siege of Rochelle," which fell upon the public ear like dew upon a thirsty soil, to be re-echoed with untiring frequency and gusto in every form, and through every medium of interpretation, and to receive the final consecration of the "barrel-organ."

Never, indeed, since the days of Tancredi had any work so seized hold of the public taste; and as in Tancredi, *parvis componere magna*, what struck the general sense was the youthful boldness and spontaneous freedom of the composer's inspiration. To hazard a somewhat unpoetical comparison, such an issuing forth of real downright tune, stamped in the mint of Apollo, after a long period of constrained and timid attempts at English opera, was like a resumption

of cash payments, and the substitution of the chirping glittering gold pieces for the flimsy and doubtful one-pound note. The effect was electrical; and as Byron had risen one morning and found himself famous, Balfe could, after the production of "The Siege of Rochelle," rub his waking eyes, and stare at his own sudden and unmistakable popularity.

CHAPTER II.

THE following year was destined to bring about the liberal fulfilment of Malibran's promise to Balfe, that he should write an opera on purpose for her, which she would get produced. "The Maid of Artois" was written for that incomparable artist, and brought out in the year 1836, Mr. Alfred Bunn furnishing the drama and words for the vocal pieces, and thus commencing the poetical career which has been immortalized by the allusions to the "Poet Bunn," scattered so plentifully in the early pages of *Punch*. To the success of this, the second of the long series of English operas destined to flow from the pen of Balfe, the magnificent singing and acting of the great Marie Malibran contributed to no insignificant extent; and remarkable indeed was that success, for it is recorded that, in the course of the first sixteen nights of its performance, "The Maid of Artois" brought into the treasury the

sum of 5690*l.* 11*s.*, being at the rate of 355*l.* per night.

There are one or two incidents connected with this opera, while it was in the process of incubation, which used to be related by the composer, and which, though rather illustrative of the characteristic peculiarities of Malibran than of Balfe, will none the less be welcomed by the reader, as must be all that however remotely relates to so great and memorable an artist. The *rondo finale*, which had been in the first instance written as a conclusion to the opera, was quite a different composition from that by the execution of which Malibran had on the first night brought down the house in such a tempest of applause. With the morceau originally written for this position, the composer had felt his dissatisfaction growing every day stronger as the rehearsals went on, until at length, almost at the last hour, that is to say, the very day before the last final rehearsal, Balfe felt so convinced it would prove ineffective, that he resolutely determined to compose another in its place. Accordingly, at the last rehearsal but one, he disclosed to Malibran his fears for the success of the *rondo*. "You are mad," she replied; "it is the most brilliant piece in the opera."

Balfe, nevertheless, persisted in his objections, and

expressed his determination to write another air, notwithstanding the persuasions of the prima donna to the contrary. With this resolution firmly impressed upon his mind he went straight home, and tired with the day's exertions, threw himself upon a sofa, where he shortly fell into a sound sleep, doubtless after dozingly revolving some subject for his new *finale*. It was midnight before he awoke, and then feeling refreshed by his slumbers, he sat himself down to the piano. At once an idea came unsought. A few minutes of rapid elaboration and the *finale* was written, which, sung by Malibran, proved so wondrously effective, and to which so many singers since—Viardot, Alboni, Cruvelli—have been indebted as a medium for displaying their qualities of voice and skill of execution with the happiest result. By the popularity of this *rondo* the name of Balfe was even thus early carried all over the Continent; and even in Russia it became an established favourite, being there known as "Balfe's air;" so that years afterwards it served the composer as a credential; for, when introduced to the Empress at a Court concert, he was asked by the illustrious lady if he were not "M. Balfe of the air."

To return, however, to our anecdote. At eight o'clock the next morning Balfe, all impatience, hur-

ried off to Conduit Street, where Malibran and her husband then resided. He found De Beriot practising his violin in the drawing-room, and immediately played him the new *rondo*, with which De Beriot was so enchanted that he declared Malibran must hear it at once. Malibran was, however, at that hour in bed, comfortably enjoying her morning doze, and felt by no means inclined to disturb herself, especially for such a purpose; for she was as firmly possessed in favour of the original *rondo* as was Balfe against it. In this state of things De Beriot suggested that a small cottage piano, part of the furniture of the drawing-room, should be carried up into Malibran's bedroom, and Balfe should play over his new inspiration to the recalcitrant singer. The shutters were thrown open, the curtains of her bed drawn aside, all to the infinite indignation of Malibran; and in this most unfavourable mood was she forced to listen to the *rondo*, not without loudly protesting that the two ruthless disturbers of her rest were "both cracked."

Balfe, however, proceeded, and after a few bars the unwilling listener raised herself from her attitude of passive resignation, and, resting on one elbow, eagerly drank in, with ever brightening beams of delight glowing in her intelligent face, the entire composition to the last note. Then bursting out in terms of rapturous

admiration, she insisted on embracing Balfe in token of her sincere conversion to the new *rondo*, which she promised to sing at the rehearsal that very morning if a copy were left with her to study. This the delighted composer wrote out at once, and Malibran kept her word, singing the piece with a spirit and perfection which drew enforced applause from all present—singers, band, and chorus; a discounting of the night's triumph which, however, did not diminish one iota of its full value, as has been already recorded.

There is another little incident to be related about this opera, showing how great artists, from the force of continual adulation, become encouraged in a waywardness which often leads them into errors of judgment, often inconsistent with their own better knowledge. In the original score Balfe had written a ballad for Isoline, the words of which commenced, "Yon moon o'er the mountain," and at the rehearsal Malibran introduced into it extraneous ornaments of so strange a character that the composer requested that she would omit them, and sing the music simply as it was written. The prima donna had, however, set her heart upon the cadences, and clung to them obstinately, pleading her implicit acquiescence to Balfe's wishes and directions in all the rest of the opera, to be allowed this one little exception. A most

insinuating argument, but Balfe, in stern adherence to the dictates of true art, still objected. Then came entreaties : the singer would bless Balfe if he would only let her have her way this once. It was Malibran that spoke thus, and what could mortal man do but bow and acquiesce ? The ballad *was* sung with all the darling cadences, and fell flat. The failure which had so justified Balfe's judgment was, however, attributed by Malibran, with characteristic wilfulness, to the darkness of the scene. To gratify this new whim the scene was changed to broad daylight, and the "Poet Bunn" had to modify his inspiration—his effusions were generally elastic enough in sense to permit verbal changes, even to such opposites, without obvious damage—and "Yon moon o'er the mountain" became "Yon *sun* o'er the mountain." Still the ballad was listened to without a sign of approbation, and was finally withdrawn, disappearing from the score altogether, never to be again restored.

In the book already referred to published by Alfred Bunn, there is an anecdote referring to the first performance of "The Maid of Artois," which, as no less amusingly characteristic of Malibran than emphatically indicative of the triumphant success she achieved on that occasion, may be appropriately quoted here.

"She had borne along the two first acts," writes the ex-manager, "on the first night of performance in such a flood of triumph that she was bent, by some almost superhuman effort, to continue its glory to the final fall of the curtain. I went into her dressing-room, previous to her commencement of the third act, to ask how she felt, and she replied—

"'Very tired; but'—and her eye suddenly lighted up—'you angry devil, if you will contrive to get me a pint of porter into the desert scene, you shall have an encore to your *finale*.'

"Had I been dealing with any other performer, I should perhaps have hesitated in complying with a request that might have been dangerous in its application at the moment; but to check Malibran's powers was to annihilate them. I therefore arranged that behind the pillar of drifted sand, on which she falls in a state of exhaustion towards the close of the desert scene, a small aperture should be made in the stage; and it is a fact that underneath the stage, through that aperture, a pewter pint of porter was conveyed to the parched lips of this rare child of song, which so revived her, after the terrible exertion the scene led to, that she electrified the audience and had strength to repeat the charm with the *finale* to 'The Maid of Artois.' The novelty of the circumstance so tickled

her fancy, and the draught itself was so extremely refreshing, that it was arranged during the subsequent run of the opera for the negro slave, at the head of the governor's procession, to have in the gourd suspended at his neck the same quantity of the same beverage, to be applied to her lips on his first beholding the apparently dying Isoline."

Doubt has been thrown on the complete authenticity of the above anecdote, and it is suggested that its details, so destructive as they are of the romance of stage representation, are themselves the offspring of romance. But granting that Bunn availed himself of a poet's licence to embellish the tale, it is not so improbable in itself as to be incredible. Supposing it to be merely *ben trovato*, it is a more harmless invention than most of those which are the penalty of being celebrated, and to know that the great Malibran solaced herself, during an arduous performance, with a draught of humble porter is no detraction, but rather a pleasing and humanizing set-off to her transcendant abilities.

In the following year, 1837, a third opera was produced, the title of which, "Catherine Grey," sufficiently indicates its subject: one obviously not of a character congenial with the vein of Balfe's natural inspiration, and by which he was, in all probability,

overweighted. Moreover, he had no longer the advantage of being interpreted by such an artist as Malibran; and, by some strange fatality, the parts of Catherine and Queen Elizabeth were assigned to the wrong persons, in diametrical opposition to their obvious and natural fitness: Miss Romer being cast for Elizabeth, and Mrs. Wood for Catherine; whereas the parts should evidently have been reversed. Such is an example of the results which flow from the lax system of management, and the absence of proper disciplinary power in the hands of theatrical directors, enabling them to control the arbitrary exigences and whims of artists, which prevail in this country to the detriment of the interests of true art, and, properly viewed, to the pecuniary damage of all theatrical establishments. In consequence of this mistaken arrangement, the opera was much less successful than it might have been, although the probabilities are that, under no circumstances, was it calculated to make any very profound impression. A composer must have got both fortune and genius in a strict compact indeed to bring forth three brilliant successes in succession; nor does the natural ebb and flow of all human affairs permit of such a continuity of triumphs. "Catherine Grey" and "Joan of Arc" which followed with the interval of another year, were the reaction

of "The Siege of Rochelle" and "The Maid of Artois."

It is worth while recording, as a proof of the soundness of Balfe's judgment even in his own case, where it is so common for the most sagacious to err, that the *rondo finale,* which he had withdrawn from its place in the last named opera to substitute an entirely new composition, was introduced by him at the end of "Catherine Grey," and failed to produce any effect. With respect to "Joan of Arc," it may be mentioned that it was rivalled, and truth to speak, outshone by the "Amilie" of his old master Rooke, whose work was brought out at Covent Garden Theatre, under the management of Mr. Macready, and contained several airs which became considerably popular at the time, and raised hopes with respect to the future fame of the composer, already a veteran, though till then unknown, which were never destined to be realized. Meanwhile "Joan of Arc," though containing some ambitious writing and several captivating melodies, did not materially add to Balfe's reputation.

After the production (in 1838) of a fifth opera, "Diadeste," Balfe's first purely comic opera in English, but which, though containing an abundance of catching tunes, was not fated to make a long-lived impression, the high compliment was paid to the composer

—an entirely exceptional one indeed to one of his nationality—in the proposal on the part of Laporte, then manager of the Italian Opera at Her Majesty's Theatre, to write an opera for the pre-eminent group of artists forming at that time the staple company under that impressario's rule; a constellation of stars whose very names even—all that remains of them now, alas!—have the power to dazzle. Falstaff's Windsor adventures was the subject chosen by the composer, and a sufficiently satisfactory libretto being furnished him by Signor Maggione, the opera was written in the astonishingly short period of two months. The characters were sustained by Grisi, Persiani, Albertazzi, Rubini, Tamburini, and Lablache! What a cast, and what a culmination of the benignant star that ruled the destinies of Balfe! But we will defer to another chapter such details of interest as belong to this auspicious event in the career of the young composer.

CHAPTER III.

THE newspapers had announced that two English composers had received commissions to produce works for Her Majesty's Theatre ; but whether or no this was the case, or the paragraph had been set afloat to diminish the distinction attaching to the order which Balfe certainly had received from Laporte, and which led to the creation of his "Falstaff," that opera alone found its way to the Italian stage, having been written in the wonderfully short interval of two months ; for in facility the Irish composer ranked with Italy's most unpremeditated song-birds. Nevertheless, I have read in more than one record that this work was the result of long and laboured preparation. But this is only on a par with the tone of general detraction and carping with which by the native critics was hailed their fellow-countryman's brave and successful entry into the lists with the great foreign writers, whose too exclusive worship

they so inconsistently laid to the door of the fashionable public. The musical Aristarchus of the *Athenæum* of that date, exercising even then those arts of apparent candour, yet too effectually malicious intent, in which he became so practised and mischievous an adept, in particular distinguished himself by a sweeping succession of damnatory remarks put forward under the mask of patronizing astonishment that an English composer, professedly belonging to the most modern Italian school, should have succeeded so ill on his own chosen ground ; and that with all the advantage of a corps of singers of extraordinary eminence, with whose several styles, powers, and propensities he was intimately familiar, he should have failed to have afforded any of them a happy opportunity for vocal display. The few sparing exceptions to the severity of this censure, while apparently vindicating the sincerity and well meaning of the writer, only served in reality to enlarge the wound by shifting the position of the dagger.

And this was the encouragement held out to native composers in the midst of the hypocritical outcry raised against their neglect. The cause of such destructive advocacy of the cause of native talent is only too patent. Each critic is the mouthpiece of a clique or an individual whose pretension it is exclusively to represent

the highest and only acceptable form of indigenous art. Hence the internecine warfare betwixt "*Tweedle-dum*" and "*Tweedle-dee*" perpetuated to the present day, and forming really the only effective barrier against the progress of native English music. Its representatives are eternally squabbling with each other amidst mutual throat-cutting, while foreign musicians present a compact and serried phalanx as opposed to ourselves, ready to laugh, sneer, and contemptuously trample on the very idea of an English musician, with most harmonious concert.

The truth was, most unpalatable as it might be to many, that "Falstaff" achieved a brilliant and undoubted success, and that if it owed much to the almost unparalleled assemblage of great and gifted artists by whom it was interpreted, it served no less to display the admirably dramatic, versatile, and inventive genius of its composer. The proof of its merits is in the fact that foreigners, less jealous of English genius than Englishmen themselves, have accepted it, and rank it among the good examples of Italian comic opera. This is undeniable; and if it has never been repeated in this country since it first saw the light, certain portions of the work are still well known in France, Germany, and Italy; the verdict of H. F. Chorley (may his judgments lie light upon

him!) notwithstanding; and if anything has operated against its more favourable regard, it is the totally inadequate libretto of the poetaster, for whose share in the production that enlightened critic reserved his unqualified praise.

Very likely Balfe's repeated successes may have appeared too much of a good thing. That a composer of British birth, with pinions full-fledged for flight into the regions of opera, should have appeared, was a satisfactory circumstance; but that he should pour forth in rapid succession one work after the other, beginning with "The Siege of Rochelle," following on with "The Maid of Artois," then "Catherine Grey," then "Joan of Arc," and now "Diadeste" and "Falstaff," all between 1835 and 1838, was a wearying of Providence, and betrayed a presumption on the part of the prolific bard, and a disposition to tax the goodnature of his fellow-countrymen, that required a check, especially as, with the exception of "Catherine Grey," all these works attained an absolute success, and contributed to sustain and extend the popularity of the composer.

"Joan of Arc," the book of which was furnished by the gentle Fitzball, had to weather a sort of double-headed rivalry, inasmuch as "Amilie," the very

charming opera of Balfe's old instructor, Rooke, was occupying the public ear with a group of captivating melodies; and the same theatre which brought forward the work of a rival composer, Covent Garden, set up a formidable opposition "Joan" in the shape of a *blue fire* melodrame, written by a clever dramatist, Mr. Serle, and in which the warlike heroine was impersonated by Miss Huddart (Mrs. Warner), then in the bloom of her talents and remarkable outward graces, and the very actress for such a character. Nevertheless, coming late in the field as it did, for managers in those barbarous days had a habit of forestalling each other—a habit to which even the high-minded Macready scrupled not to condescend—Balfe's operatic "Maid of Orleans" fought her way bravely to the front, and gallantly maintained her position for a goodly succession of nights, drawing excellent houses, Balfe himself in one of the parts assisting personally towards this result with his charming and exquisitely managed baritone voice and genuine and touching expression.

In this opera occurred a melody, "Peace of the Valley," which was considered by some to excel even his famous "Light of other days;" but even that admirable inspiration had been sneered at by the superfine

critics who objected to the accompaniment on the cornetta, as the cornet à piston was then called, that instrument having been so employed for the first time by Balfe. There was also another song in this work, with a magnificent violin accompaniment, which was sung by Templeton—"Dear maid, when thou art sleeping," and was much and deservedly praised.

"Diadeste," first performed at Drury Lane Theatre, on May 17th, 1838, the same year in which "Falstaff" was written and produced, was called an opera buffa in the bills, and likewise as to its libretto proceeded from the ready pen of Fitzball. The cast included the names of Templeton, H. Phillips, Giubilei, Miss Romer, Fanny Healey, and the piquante and charming Miss Poole. I know little or nothing of this work or its subject except that it contained a great deal of light and captivating music, and among the rest a delightfully graceful duetto, coquettish and refined, "Diadeste, charming play!" and that it met with a brilliant reception. In this opera, likewise, according to a passage in Fitzball's memoir from which I have already quoted, Balfe himself played, having succeeded Mr. Phillips, whom some engagement drew elsewhere, in the part of Count Stenio, and causing, as it appears, no regret at the exchange, which will surprise none who

ever heard Balfe sing in those days, or had the least experience of his remarkable versatility.

The usual depreciatory remarks from the professedly scientific critics, intermingled with an occasional award of praise to illustrate the absence of all bias—the complete, the benevolent impartiality of the learned judge passing sentence—followed this as all the other rapidly succeeding productions of the young musician. To peruse these erudite pronouncements upon the works of a man who had studied as we have seen Balfe had studied, and who possessed the lavish natural gifts that were his rich inheritance, is at this distance of time amusing enough, and allows the reader to see that the trick of running a popular composer down on high scientific and superfine æsthetical grounds, is as stale and stereotyped a performance on the credulity of the uninitiated as any of those numerous antiquated, yet ever successful *supercheries*, by which innocence is entrapped in our streets for the benefit of gentlemen of extraordinary acquirements to whom fortune has not been kind. The ridiculous jargon and the glaring inconsistencies in which these, co-called, criticisms abound, should suffice to defeat the imposture of the whole high-sounding farrago, but that people are only too willing to be deceived even at the cost of their treasures, and allow them-

selves to be talked out of their enjoyment of a favourite work as the yokel is talked out of his watch or his ready money.

To be told that a composer is too fond of a form of melody in which "the fourth and seventh are omitted from the scale," or indulges too freely in the "extreme inversion of the German sixth," is bad enough for the tender conscience of the non-professional who has been innocently guilty of admiring such terrible transgressions; but when to this is added that "the old English ballad, garnished with a spice of German instrumentation," is the prevailing material of this malefactor, yet that at the same time its general basis is "of a French cast," his hair stands on end, and he is ready to scout the reprobate author of such things and hate himself to have ever wagged his head in approval of similar enormities. The most amusing part of all this is, that the writers of these abstruse profundities are often totally ignorant of the subject they so glibly handle, and would be puzzled to take a part in a boy's "comb concert." They get themselves coached in all this technical trash by some needy disappointed professor, who is glad for the price of a dinner to vent his misanthropy by the same stroke alike on the more prosperous journalist, whom he renders ridiculous, and the successful brother musician the

growth of whose laurels he helps for a time to retard.

With the production of "Diadeste" and "Falstaff" respectively, in May and July of this year—1838—what may be called the début of Balfe as an English composer in his native land—a jet of productiveness embracing in succession five operas in three years—was brought to a close. Bunn's managerial struggles, floundering and spluttering without system or matured direction through a multiplicity of abortive efforts, were drawing to a close. Ranging through all the gradations and degradations of the drama, shifting from opera to spectacle, from tragedy to burlesque, from ballet to wild-beast show, and thus not unfrequently provoking the tide of fortune in his favour, he had squandered its benefits amongst double and even treble companies, exclusive of quadrupeds, extravagant mise en scène, and a reckless spirit of gambling in bidding for the last new sensation, which would have exhausted a Pactolus. The winter season of Drury Lane, the last under this chaotic revel of misrule, dwindled to a simple attempt at establishing grand opera in English dress, but with means totally inadequate to the object in view. Sir Henry Bishop was engaged as conductor, and the chief vocalists engaged were Miss Betts, Miss Poole, Madame Albertazzi, Henry Phillips, and—it is not

pleasant to have to confess it—our successful young *maestro*, Balfe himself.

It is true the position assigned to him was the highest. He made his début as Don Juan, and is said to have been the best next to Tamburini, both as to acting and singing, notwithstanding that his physique was unfavourable; but it cannot be thought of without regret that one who had already given to the world such brilliant assurance of distinguished genius, should have been compelled to alight from the Pegasus of creative fancy to mount the hackney of executive talent, and ride post along the dull high-road for the next few stages of his life-journey. Necessity, however, is a hard and despotic master, with little sympathy for fine feelings, and Balfe had provision to make for more than himself.

More than once in this early portion of his career Balfe had, during intervals when his pen was unemployed, to seek assistance from this second string to his bow; but it serves not to notice in any detail such parts of his history save to keep up the continuity of the narrative. It is from no feeling that his dignity, socially or intellectually, was in any way compromised by becoming for a time a player and a public singer. These are not days when we can afford to look upon any legitimate occupation of the human

faculties, especially when the result is one of the highest and most refined forms of artistic pleasure, as a blot on the scutcheon, whether it be pursued as a means of livelihood or not. Had Shakspeare lived now, when a plebeian may get hoisted to the highest pride of place after filling his purse by the concoction of light novels and still scribble for hire, after his elevation, he could have spared to bid one of the persons to whom his sonnets are addressed "Chide with the guilty goddess, Fortune"—

> "That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means, which public manners breed.
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdued
> To what it works in, like the dyer's hand."

The passion for equality, which is the distinctive badge of this age, makes it love on the contrary to hear that its great ones have done drudge's work, and despise only those who affect contempt for the means by which they rose.

That Balfe should have had to "go here and there" and "make himself a motley to the view," is only to be regretted for higher reasons. The obligation to earn his living by such public means necessarily distracted his mind from that mature study of his art through the manifold opportunities he had now afforded him, while yet the inventive faculty was in all

the fervour and freshness of youth, and when the results of experience being brought to bear on the creative impulse, the strides of genius become gigantic. If, therefore, there be any just ground for the criticism so frequently addressed to Balfe's productions that they are wanting in that thorough completeness of form and mature richness of thought which stands in opposition to sketchy and hasty, though clever and even inspired work, that it should be so justified in any degree, may be traced to these frequent and unfortunate intermissions in the steady course of the composer's self-culture, at the critical moment when, for the first time, he was fairly encountering the ordeal of a public trial of his pretensions, caused by the absorbing turmoil and ceaseless petty pre-occupations of a public performer's career.

That the exuberant vitality which characterized the man, and probably a strong faith in the all-sufficiency of the thorough and uncompromising earnestness he brought to the cultivation of his art, blinded him to the danger he was running, cannot find better proof than in the fact that after two years of a desultory employment of his artistic faculties in provincial tours and short engagements, he actually assumed the cares of management, and voluntarily faced the multitudinous responsibilities of an impressario, who

undertakes to satisfy the fickle public, and a list of fashionable and exacting subscribers into the bargain. This piece of complicated folly Balfe perpetrated in the year 1841, when as lessee of the English Opera House he commenced, amidst a multitude of favourable auguries, and under the most august patronage, the young Queen herself having engaged a box for the season, the essay of establishing a National English Opera. The prospectus announced a new romantic opera by Balfe himself, entitled "Keolanthe;" but that the field was to be open freely and fearlessly to all comers, was abundantly apparent by the statement that George Macfarren, John Barnett, Edward Loder, and others were engaged in the preparation of works which would follow in due succession.

Before I come to record what fate was reserved for this doughty enterprise, a subject which may fitly be reserved for a separate chapter, a glance at the vicissitudes of the previous two years, spent chiefly in the character of *primo baritono*, and including two visits to his native city of Dublin, shall furnish the tag of this. The collapse of Bunn's grand operatic venture, which brought that sagacious and active manager's career to a close, with a loss of 25,328*l.* 15*s.* 1*d.* in four years (as disclosed the following year in the Bankruptcy Court), set Balfe free to wander whither he chose.

That he should desire to revisit his native city, and show himself to his friends and fellow-countrymen with his new laurels freshly twined about his brow, was natural, and being offered an engagement to form part of the operatic company Mr. and Mrs. Wood were taking with them to open the Theatre Royal, Dublin, he seized the lucky opportunity, and became the chief baritone of the troop, greatly pleasing his compatriots in that capacity, and acting and singing the usual round of characters allotted to that *emploi* in the regular repertoire of star singers, which, however, did not include any of those works of his own by which the Irish composer had so suddenly shot up into fame. This did not apparently suit the ultra-patriotic temper of the jealous Hibernians, and a clamour was raised about the ears of the manager, Calcraft, that could only be stilled by the announcement that Balfe would return in the following year and play in his own operas. The storm of national displeasure caused, indeed, by this apparent slight put upon the budding reputation of their young fellow-countryman, was exaggerated to the most tremendous proportions, and was even put forward by the political press as an illustration and in support of the "injustice to Ireland" cry. In its sequel, however, the story will be found to furnish rather a strong and very amusing

illustration of the utterly flimsy and unsubstantial foundation in reality on which this sort of high-pressure fluster is raised, when practically tested by the concession of the thing so loudly clamoured for.

I have found some trace of a quarrel between the rival song-birds, Mrs. Wood and Miss Romer, on the ground of a certain promise exacted by the latter from Balfe, that he should only write for her, or she would refuse to sing in any opera of his. This led to reprisals on the part of the Woods, who, in their turn, would not appear in any work by Balfe; and this apparently was the true cause of the neglect he suffered at their hands. There is a corroboration of this view in the fact that the Woods did produce Rooke's "Amilie," Balfe singing in it, and obtaining immense applause by his rendering of two favourite ballads—"My Boyhood's Home" and "Woman's Love"—in the opera of his fellow-countryman and rival. This one-sided concession to national feeling was insufficient, however, and the clamour of discontent went on till he appeared in the manner to be related. In the meantime a public dinner was got up in recognition of the young composer of "The Siege of Rochelle" and "The Maid of Artois," which took place on Boxing-day, at Morrison's Hotel, and a testimonial was presented to Balfe on the occasion, in the

shape of a gold snuff-box, amidst much eloquent speech-making.

Whether this celebration and the gift which accompanied it—to say nothing of the oratory—had exhausted both the enthusiasm and the funds of his fellow-townsmen, I know not; but I have been informed on excellent authority that when Balfe returned in accordance to his engagement with Calcraft, and when his two most successful operas above-mentioned, together with "Diadeste," were produced, with new expensive scenery and decorations, the scanty support afforded him showed that from some such cause or another the tide of public patronage was no longer running with its previous headlong violence in favour of native Irish talent, and it was cogently impressed upon Balfe that, unlike charity, justice to Ireland does not begin at home.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR the space of a year or more before Balfe's attempt to establish something permanent in the shape of a National English Opera, there had been no inconsiderable agitation carried on through the press, among the musical profession and a certain number of persons who put themselves forward under various signatures as patrons and well-wishers of musical art in this country, with the same object in view. That the public at large was ever much affected by their proceedings does not appear. Probably not beyond the enjoyment usually afforded in seeing "a row" of some sort going on, and without either a very clear idea or any strong desire to know what it was all about. Letters appeared signed by some of the leading names of the day, in connexion with the subject, supporting or throwing cold water on the scheme. Among the latter was ranged the even then high-standing name of George Macfarren, whose publicly expressed per-

suasion was that English musicians would have no chance of attracting notice and patronage in their own country, unless they formed a colony in some foreign city, and, by publishing and performing their works there, obtained that stamp of approval from European criticism and success, under the warranty of which alone they would be accepted as deserving attention at home.

This sounded at the time, no doubt, as a very harsh and exaggerated satire on England's mistrust of her native talent, but the whole history of the movement and the fate of our leading musicians have proved, what all who knew Macfarren were fully aware of, that he had a very old head on young shoulders. Ungracious as the words seemed at the time, they have been fully borne out down to very recent times. Nevertheless it was not then, nor is it now, any reason for not trying to instil a deeper interest and a stronger faith into the public mind and feeling in the cause of an English school of music. It is the business of those concerned to go on trying until they have succeeded in making a better position for themselves and their cause, and the only thing to be deprecated in the matter is the mad, the imbecile repetition of experiments that have been made exactly after the same fashion over and over again, and as

frequently failed. If, when fresh trials are made no advantage is derived in the method of their making from the example of preceding failures, those who venture and lose their money in them deserve no sympathy, but rather the reverse, as compromising by their foolish obstinacy the future of a good cause.

The reader, it is to be hoped, will not be impatient if I dwell a little at length on the attempt of Balfe the composer to become Balfe the manager, which occurred in this year 1841, and rapidly ended in disaster, or if I preface it by recounting how, the year before, Mr. John Barnett the composer of "The Mountain Sylph," broke down even more swiftly and disastrously in a precisely similar enterprise. My object in doing so is to hold up a warning to others as to what they must expect, sooner or later, by a re-enactment of blunders equally tempting to perpetrate and certain to terminate in grief. Mr. John Barnett had taken a great share in the agitation already mentioned, with a view to create a feeling of interest in the public at large for a theatrical enterprise devoted to National Opera, and soon after it became rumoured that he and his brother were engaged in the endeavour to start such an undertaking. The first and great difficulty in the way was, as it seems

always likely to be, the dearth of vocal artists with the ability and the wit to serve in the execution of such a project. Dramatic tenors and *prime donne* are not abundant in any time or clime, but more especially in England and now-a-days, and both the patent theatres possessed operatic companies which absorbed the best of the available talent. Miss Romer it was found was the only possible prima donna, and that lady would only concede her services on the particular condition an opera composed by her brother, Frank Romer, and written by her brother-in-law, Mark Lemon, should be the first work produced.

The condition was hard to swallow and long resisted; but at last the Messrs. Barnett had to succumb, and the course of art, which in their minds no doubt was represented by quite a different arrangement of personal precedence, bowed to the strong family affections of the above-named distinguished artiste, sometimes playfully called the English Malibran. Accordingly on the 1st of December, 1840, the Messrs. Barnett attempted the inauguration of a National English Opera as a permanent institution of the country, by the production of this "Hobson's choice" at the St. James's Theatre, then called the Prince's Theatre, an establishment whose history seems as naturally and indissolubly connected with

abortive dramatic schemes as an orthopædic hospital with distortions of the human frame, and which has sheltered them in almost as great and instructive variety. Mr. Frank Romer's opera which by so fortunate a chance was enabled to see the light of the footlamps under circumstances of unusual interest and excitement was entitled "Fridolin," being founded on Schiller's well-known poem "The Message to the Forge," a subject since treated in the shape of a cantata by Randegger. Miss Romer played the principal part in the family production, and the first night of the new enterprise was moreover signalized by an address spoken by Mrs. Selby; a lady, unfortunately, who though her talent was undoubted, was never associated with any new undertaking, but it was regarded as a sure presage of its untimely dissolution. No "banshee" ever more certainly foretold calamity than this estimable person, nor was her reputation belied on this occasion. After the first representation of the opera, which went off apparently with every sign of a tremendous success, the whole thing dwindled off, and after struggling to an eighth performance, Mr. F. Romer's special and particular opera and the National English Opera simultaneously terminated their fatally intertwined existence.

Humiliated and disgusted at a disaster that was

yet easy to be foreseen, Mr. Barnett gave up an enterprise which ought never to have been entered on with so little preparation against the most obvious vicissitudes. The lull of silence after this collapse was short. The mortification of disappointed hope was not allowed to rankle long in the bosoms of native aspirants to musical fame. The work of preparation was sounded for Balfe's succeeding scheme, almost as rapidly as the herald proclaims "the king lives" after his brother had made a directly opposite statement. It was at the English Opera House that this new and, it was thought, more hopeful experiment was to be made. More hopeful because there was every sign that the sinews of war would not be wanting, for it was understood that the new impressario had a well filled subscription list to sustain him, at the head of which encouragingly figured Her Gracious Majesty.

Though Balfe too was about to commence the campaign with a work of his own, he had invited his brother composers to supply him with productions to follow it, and offered them a fair field and no favour. Again, another especially hopeful point was that his exchequer would be unburdened with superfluous expenses; only the artists actually needed for operatic performances would be engaged, and among these were numbered many whose names were high

in public esteem, as for instance, H. Phillips, Wilson, Barker, Stretton, Duruset, Miss Poole, and Madame Balfe, whose foreign reputation was considerable. A Miss Gould, who had been trained and educated by John Bennett, and on whose vocal and dramatic aptitude, thus warranted, great hopes were built, was likewise to make her début.

Every augury was thus auspicious, and Balfe seemed to be the destined founder of a National English Opera. Brief, however, was the delusion. Calamity was already lurking at hand, and delivered its first stroke on the very birthday of the enterprise—that is, the announced birthday. The opening of the season, which had been fixed to commence with the new opera of "Keolanthe," by Balfe, on Saturday the 4th of March, 1841, was inevitably postponed through the absence of Phillips, who only at the last moment informed the manager that he had engaged himself to sing on the following Monday at Dublin. It was not till the following Tuesday that the inauguration of Balfe's managerial enterprise could take place, and this false start caused by the culpable default and neglect of a leading artist, when all should have been so eager for the prosperity of the undertaking, was but the foreshadowing of subsequent misadventures and their originating source—viz., jealousy and ill-will

among the defenders of the citadel. "Keolanthe," when at last it did appear, was in all respects thoroughly successful, and but for the uneasy and secret foreboding which inevitably arises when a hitch occurs at the very outset of an undertaking, the performance would have constituted a most brilliant and inspiring commencement. The libretto furnished, as has been said, by Fitzball, was of a pretty and graceful though wild and romantic character, and had called forth from Balfe some of his most charmingly spontaneous and yet highly finished writing, and even his inveterate friends, the profound critics, so industrious in the discovery of his failings, were constrained into expressions of admiration, if not of the work as a whole, of its numerous and striking beauties.

The story underlying the dramatic incidents of the Opera carries the scene back two thousand years in time to ancient Egypt, being the embodiment and representation of the wild dream of one Andrea, a student of Padua, which mixes itself up with his actual and real life, more especially with his affection for the sister of his friend, Filippo Pavia, to whom he is made unfaithful by his love for an Egyptian princess, Keolanthe, who is protected and endowed with magical gifts by the deities of the Nile. This dream-passion after causing various tragical catastrophes, in which an enchanted

lotus flower plays a part, eventually melts away to give place to the happy wedding of the student with the fair one whom he had appeared to treat so scurvily; the bridal party breaking into the student's apartments and awakening him from such oppressive unrealities to the real and substantial happiness that awaits him. Such a subject seems happily chosen for musical treatment in the opportunities it affords for strong contrasts, both of local colouring and dramatic expression, and Balfe had availed himself of them in his happiest vein. One of his most severe critics admitted that the music was "always pleasing and often beautiful," and, what is more important still, acquitted him of any imitation of the manner of this or that school so frequently and inconsistently imputed to him, as has been seen, confessing the style to be his own, and as such better than either France or Italy could present to him as a model.

The work, moreover, appears to have been most satisfactorily executed on all hands. Miss Gould, the débutante, proved herself worthy her eminent teacher's tuition, and justified his prognostics as Pavia, obtaining immense applause by her execution of a charming little song allotted to her. Madame Balfe as Keolanthe fully bore out her continental fame, both as a singer and an actress. In the latter respect,

the impression produced by her was, I am myself enabled to testify, such as to place her in the highest rank of dramatic ability, both for force of impersonation and prestige of manner. Fitzball writes of her, on this occasion, in the memoirs already alluded to, with more truth than elegance of diction, "she was a great actress, recalling to my imagination all I had heard related of 'Clairon;' the supernatural manner which she assumed took every one by surprise, while her *deep-thought* conception of the part seemed to set every one thinking." Wilson, who though not a good actor, possessed a fine tenor voice, did fair justice to the Student's part. Stretton, an excellent baritone and efficient actor, played and sang effectively as his friend Filippo, and Phillips, to whom the character of an Egyptian priest, Ombrastro, was allotted, produced a profound impression. As to the mounting of the new opera, everything was done for it "without regard to expense," the scenery and costumes being alike picturesque, characteristic, and brilliant. Nor did the audience fail to recognise by their plaudits the completeness and the many and distinguished merits of the performance. "Keolanthe" in short was a decided hit. Yet in little more than two months' time the theatre was closed, and the whole of Balfe's National Opera scheme, that had looked so promising and

hopeful at the outset, fell to the ground, never again to rise, leaving, among other victims, Mr. Macfarren with a completed opera, written expressly for this newly opened arena, useless on his hands.

It is not my intention to chronicle the succession of intestine bitterness and discontent which accompanied Balfe's career as a manager, and made it a difficulty with him day by day to keep his faith with the public. At last the wretched state of things caused by disloyalty and defection on all sides, culminated one fatal Saturday evening, on the 13th of May, when Phillips having already definitely deserted the undertaking after disappointing the public at the last moment, Mr. Barnett, following this pernicious example, suddenly withdrew his pupil, Miss Gould, on the very night of her announced performance, by a letter demanding as the alternative of her immediate retirement, the payment of the arrears of salary due to her. Thereupon, after mentally apostrophizing his brother composer in the strain of "Et tu Brute," though I am tempted to imagine with a somewhat stronger form of expression, Balfe girded his loins to accomplish a resolve which had no doubt been floating in a nebulous state about his mind, and flashed out before the curtain where he delivered the following highly characteristic address—at once the

last dying speech and funeral oration over his attempted instauration of a National English Opera:—

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—

"About two hours ago I received a note from Mr. John Barnett, whose pupil Miss Gould is, stating that he could not allow her to appear at this theatre any longer. She being the third who has left this establishment, I am really unable at this moment to substitute anything for "Il Paddy Whack,"* as "Marcelline" cannot be played, neither Mr. Harris nor Mr. Selby being in the house. Had I known of this sooner I could have put something over the bills to prevent you coming, but if you will wait five or ten minutes, perhaps Mr. Harris will arrive. This is the last night of the English Opera House, or at least of it under my reign. (Cries of "No!") The fact is there are not sufficient funds in the house, and I am already burdened with five or six hundred pounds debt through it. I have done all in my power for the establishment. I brought my opera of 'Keolanthe' gratis, for which Madame Vestris offered me 300 guineas if I would have brought it out at her theatre. I had another opera of Mr. Macfarren's ready

* "Il Paddy Whacko in Italia," a musical trifle in the buffo style, composed to a libretto by Samuel Lover.

cast and studied, but I was not able to produce it in consequence of the secession of Mr. Phillips. (Cries of "Shame!") I am exceedingly sorry I ever was such a fool as to become a manager to an English theatre. In that capacity I will never appear again before you—in future only as a composer."

So ended what might apparently be considered a well promising attempt at the attainment of a desideratum, till then and still clamoured for in vain—viz., a theatre for the production of works by native composers interpreted by native artists. The immediate cause of failure in the teeth of a brilliant commencement is to be traced to internal squabbles arising from overweening individual pretensions in the first rank, and secondarily to the inadequate funds to battle with sufficiently long-winded pertinacity against this constitutional evil, until the rebellious recalcitrants could be replaced by more loyal and equally efficient subjects. That Balfe or any other composer was not the right man in the right place, as manager of such an undertaking, must also be conceded. The very plausibility with which the accusation might be brought, that the whole scheme was animated by a merely selfish motive, would suffice to instil the poison of jealousy throughout its whole constitution, and would afford a specious justification for similar

self-seeking in the conduct of all concerned. It seems evident that until such an attempt takes its origin and guidance outside of purely professional classes, or trade interests, the same evils will inevitably develop themselves, and as jealousies can never be absent from similar associations, all that can be done is to effectually control them by the highest moral authority in the governing power and practical independence of any one individual or more for the continued existence of the undertaking. Now this latter and essential stipulation is unattainable in the present condition of things. The small number of artists available for operatic performances must always place any attempts of the like kind at the mercy of individual caprice or discontent. Here then is the point at which all efforts must commence, if it be desired to found such an institution as a National English Opera House. Without a sufficient body of trained artists, to place the management of such an establishment beyond the danger of individual tyranny or "strikes," any endeavour to endow this country with an institution at all corresponding with the Grand Opera in Paris must fail from the causes that operated in the instances that have just been recorded. And it is the desire to point this important moral, that I must plead as my excuse for dwelling at

so much length on the managerial experiment which was but an extraneous episode in the career of Balfe.

His was not a nature to be permanently affected by the frustration of hopes however warmly entertained or however disastrous their failure. If, as he looked round him, the prospect at home was so disheartening, for as he surveyed the field of operatic enterprise little met his view but wreck or impending ruin, is it surprising that he should look once more abroad? To foreign lands, therefore, where he had encountered before so much generous encouragement, was he constrained to turn his steps if he wished to continue the cultivation of that genius in the conscious possession of which he felt more and more confirmed. Fortunately for him this faith in himself was shared by one, who more than any other, could help him now that his great patroness, Malibran, was no more, and this was the legitimate successor to the empire of that queen of song, Giulia Grisi. By her he was invited to compose an opera which she promised to introduce to the Italian Opera of Paris, and herself to sustain in it the principal rôle. Is not this fact, by the way, a sufficient answer to the statement so industriously repeated by Balfe's enemies that his "Falstaff" had been an utter failure? Had she who had played in it the chief female part, and had announced it for her own benefit,

only withdrawing it on the pressure of a cabal, been of the same opinion (and where could be a better judge?) would she now have been ready to associate herself with a composer who had shown himself unequal to the task of writing for the Italian stage? I do not pause for a reply here but because it is necessary to commence a fresh chapter, in which Balfe's fortunes will be followed up in the Parisian arena, in which the stress of circumstances now provoked him to try them.

CHAPTER V.

TOWARDS the end of August in the same year that had witnessed the down-crash of Balfe's English Opera venture, there appeared in *La France Musicale* the following paragraph :—

" Balfe, l'Auber de l'Angleterre, est arrivé à Paris ; il y passera la saison d'hiver pour surveiller la mise en scène d'un opéra en trois actes, qu'il a composé pour le théâtre Italien et dont les rôles principaux sont destinés à Mdme. Grisi, à Tamburini et Mario."

This seemed certainly an example as striking as any yet recorded of Balfe's habit of alighting on his feet whenever the tide of events had temporarily compromised his equilibrium. But, alas ! it was only a semblance of his ordinary good fortune, unless indeed the miscarriage of the event thus prognosticated followed as it was by a train of circumstances which turned Balfe's footsteps, or rather those of his muse, in a new and unexpected direction, is to be interpreted,

which it may very plausibly, as a circumstance bearing favourably on the character of his future fame. Had all gone smoothly with the projected production of "Elfrida" at the Paris Italian Opera, our most popular national composer might have been tempted to devote himself entirely to the Italian style, and to have become to posterity what he only was for the flash of a brief forgotten moment, Signor Balfe.

But, *Dis aliter visum*, for in the midst of the preparations for the production of "Elfrida," and while the opera was receiving the last finishing touches, its composer was suddenly and pressingly summoned to an audience with the fair and fascinating prima donna, at whose instigation and under whose auspices the work had been begun and almost completed, and the ultimate destinies whereof were inextricably bound up with her sovereign will or whim. What passed between Balfe and the divine Giulia at this interview held in strict tête-à-tête, and with closed doors? I am certainly in a position to answer this question both categorically and accurately, but as I have taken upon myself the office of Balfe's biographer, and not that of inditer of Madame Giuli's private memoirs, I must abstain from satisfying the curiosity of the reader more completely than by stating that the communication then received by the composer extinguished

totally and finally the hope of seeing his opera produced. Whatever other personage, real or imaginary, might be ushered into the world between then and the following year, to whose birth the lovely Grisi might be accessory, it would not be Balfe's "Elfrida." Through circumstances beyond the control of mortal will or wish, that lady's appearance had to be postponed *sine die*, and the disappointed and mortified author of her being must not only put up bravely and gallantly with his chagrin, but maintain strict silence as to the motives which made him withdraw the opera, giving it forth as his own spontaneous resolve, the cause of which—legitimate or illegitimate—had arisen within his own bosom. Had he been the greatest babbler in the world, in this instance he must have said with Hamlet—

"Break heart, for I must hold my tongue;"

or forfeit for ever his character as a man of honour and a true knight, to be branded as the unworthy recipient of a lady's most delicate confidences.

It needed all the courage and obstinate hopefulness of Balfe's sanguine temperament to bear up against a blow so crushing and so unexpected. The disaster not only affected the future prospects of his career, but threw most inconvenient disorder into his calculations for the provision of ways and means in the immediate

present. His recent experiment of management, with its attendant sacrifice of labour and money, had produced in his exchequer that vacuum which is so abhorrent, not only to material, but to human nature. Winter was approaching, and how was the wolf to be kept from the door? Paris is a charming city while napoleons or even five-franc pieces are forthcoming on demand, but poverty is even more hideous there than elsewhere from its contrast with the obtrusive gaiety that surrounds one, exaggerating rather than relieving the pangs of pennilessness, at least in him who is not to the manner born, and cannot light-heartedly pace the boulevards with the philosophical indifference to impecuniosity of a true Bohemian. In this torturing state of anxiety Balfe opened his bosom to Érard, in the assurance that from his experienced head and kind heart he would get the best advice and assistance at need, to weather the storm that had overtaken him. He was not mistaken, and instinct had led him to the precise man of all others who was to afford him ready help out of his present embarrassment, and place him on the path that should lead him back by the shortest route once more on the highway to fame and fortune.

The remedy sagaciously prescribed by Érard for Balfe's then most urgent symptoms was not, as some-

times happens when doctors advise the poor, beyond the patient's means to conform with, for a part of the ingredients in his nostrum the physician was ready and willing to supply himself. Érard advised the discomfited composer to give a concert whereby, as circumstances had deprived him of the opportunity of making his pretensions known to the Parisian public through a new work, he should appeal to their artistic judgment on credentials already published to the world, or at least that portion of it—insignificant, it is true, in this special case—comprised in the limits of England, Scotland, and Ireland, not forgetting Berwick-upon-Tweed. In other words, the programme of Balfe's concert was to be made up exclusively of compositions of his own, and Érard's well-known and spacious rooms were to be placed at his service "gratis, free, for nothing."

After advancing certain modest misgivings as to the sufficiency of such a bill of fare, and observing that there seemed a certain amount of presumption in such a scheme that might provoke the sarcasms of the Parisians, ever ready to punish any exaggerated exhibition of self-confidence, Balfe found all his objections overruled by his warm-hearted friend, who met them with the assurance that the curiosity of the whole city would be piqued by the announce-

ment of the mere existence of an English composer, as on such class of created beings was supposed to exist. There was comfort in this view of the case, if not flattery. The two, therefore, immediately proceeded to put the notion into execution, and to organize the "Grand Concert Balfe." Singers and instrumental executants were recruited, of due standing and popularity, and in requisite force; an imposing programme was drawn up, comprising overtures and the most telling and melodious solos, duets, and concerted pieces in his published works, to which French words were adapted by a poet discovered and employed for the occasion. The day was fixed, the concert duly advertised, and, as Érard had predicted, a sensation was produced by the bare announcement of such a *lusus naturæ* as an English composer. The concert-room was crowded; professors, amateurs, and what the French papers call "*la foule*" flocked to the "Salle Érard," eager to be present at an exhibition which promised such a triumph of Parisian connoisseurship over the self-conceit of the lumpish, tuneless son of Albion.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment of this vast audience at the musician-like qualities, the fresh originality of inspiration, and, above all, the undeniable and charming tunefulness manifested in all

that they had come to sneer at, and were now listening to in rapture. Piece after piece was asked for a second time, and not only was the concert a means of amply refilling Balfe's exchequer, but his name was in a fair way of being set apart as that of a remarkable exception to the law of nature, which rendered it as impossible for the soil of Great Britain to produce a musician, as for its climate to ripen pine-apples, or its playwrights to bring forth original pieces. Balfe went home that night delighted and radiant. It was not yet time for him to dream that he dwelt in marble halls, but the visions that haunted his slumbers were no doubt of the most roseate and flattering description. Yet could they not equal the bright tints with which, his eyes broad awakened, the incident that awaited him the next morning justified him in painting the prospects of the future.

He had just seated himself, a little languid with the fatigue and emotions of the previous day, to his breakfast—always an early meal with him—when a visitor, unknown, and withholding his name from the domestic, was ushered into the presence of the startled and nervous composer. The stranger was cautiously wrapped up, as one who mistrusted atmospherical caprices, and he moved slowly forward with the stealthy but awkward gait peculiar to

persons whose feet are encased in "goloshes." Removing then with something of a theatrical suddenness the wrapper that concealed his features, he replied with a quiet smile in answer to the silent interrogation of Balfe's astonished looks, "Je suis Monsieur Scribe, et je viens vous demander de faire un opéra-comique avec moi."

Inured, as he might be supposed to have become, to the most violent and instantaneous changes of fortune, Balfe was nevertheless completely unnerved by this point-blank delivery of so intoxicating a message from the goddess, and by so potent and august a messenger. Literally trembling with excitement, he invited the great dramaturgist—the victorious hero of many more than a hundred fights for public favour, and in more categories of the drama than Polonius enumerates—to take a seat. Scribe then informs the happy composer that he had formed one of his audience the previous day, and so enchanted had he been with the melodious quality, and, above all, the *esprit* that characterized all he had heard, that he had there and then inwardly resolved to seek the possessor of so fresh and sparkling a vein of tuneful invention as a collaborator, and his eagerness to give effect to this resolve must plead as his excuse for so early a visit. There could be but one answer to such

a proposal from such lips, and amidst much bowing *à la Française,* and shaking of hands *à l'Anglaise.* Balfe accompanied to the door of his apartment the future librettist of his next opera, "Le Puits d'Amour."

In the authorship of the libretto, which was thenceforth furnished to Balfe piece by piece, Scribe, as was commonly the case, had a partner—M. de Saint Georges; and the constructive ingenuity of the one, conjoined with the scenic tact, dexterity, and experienced readiness of pen, if not literary ability, of the other, produced a work which inspired music such as might claim to be heard in the same arena where Boïeldieu, Auber, and Adolphe Adam had charmed the ears of their countrymen with strains in which the national taste, the love of sprightly grace, allied with a sort of premeditated artlessness and spontaneous refinement of sentiment (to use a twofold paradox) has been so admirably consulted. Of course the moment it was known that a native of the Britannic Isles was to penetrate into this temple of art so peculiarly devoted to the nation's characteristic genius, a succession of lively sarcasms were fired off by the journalists, to whom such a subject for cheap witticisms, at once flattering to the Frenchman and wormwood to the foreigner, was a windfall not to be

neglected, and the most was made of it until the first night of performance in the spring of the following year—1842—when the complete success of the opera silenced these anticipated judgments, and an unhesitating and unanimous reversal of their tenour was pronounced by the entire Parisian public, which at once placed "Le Puits d'Amour" in the regular repertoire of the Opéra Comique, and enabled the fascinating Anna Thillon, then in the height of her popularity, to add one more to the list of rôles in which her sweet and brilliant singing was heard to the best effect.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE is nothing that succeeds so well as success, is a proverb applicable in all countries, but in none so completely as in that which gave it birth. The flattering reception accorded to "Le Puits d'Amour" by the jealous and fickle Parisian public was ratified by the pens of the exuberant *feuilletonnistes* of the press, who ceasing to sneer at the English composer, hailed the Irish melodist as a Frenchman who had lost his way among the western isles, and was now triumphantly reclaimed by his legitimate kindred, while the composers smilingly made room for him within their sacred guild. In the shortest possible time Balfe became the friend of poets, musicians, and critics, was hailed as "a lion" in fashionable salons, and even obtained the countenance and patronage of the King, who was pleased to command the dedication of the new opera to his august majesty. Balfe no doubt valued this high distinction and the flattering

admiration of the world as keenly as would most mortal men. Yet it is very certain, as all who knew him would be ready to confirm, that it was not half so likely to turn his head as the marks of esteem and consideration which he received from the most eminent of the brethren of his craft, by whom, as I have said, he was unhesitatingly received as *un des leurs*.

That jealousy exists in the ranks of the musical profession in France as elsewhere it is impossible to doubt; but though it may lurk secretly in individual bosoms, it is not suffered to exhibit its hideous countenance so nakedly and repulsively as among ourselves, where it has brought contempt, ridicule, and obloquy on a class which would yet claim, by the mouthpiece of some of its advocates, almost the highest place in the hierarchy of art and intellect. In France, and I believe in other countries of the Continent, those who pursue the same object of musical fame and eminence do not wrangle and fight over the prize of public approval like football players. Each defers to the award which has placed a brother composer on the rolls of fame or popularity, and while decency, good taste, and self-respect are by this course observed to the edification of all alike, the dictates of sound policy are equally obeyed, by which the members of the musical craft as a body, by this manifestation of

mutual respect and admiration, insured in the same measure the respect and admiration of the world at large. Of an amusing and characteristic example of this sort of mutual deference paid to the worth of each other by rivals, or rather colleagues, in the divine art of music, Balfe was at this time a witness in one of the salons to which he now found privileged admittance. The story is related in the charming "Lettres Parisiennes" of Madame Emile de Girardin as having occurred after a dinner at Veron's, the celebrated proprietor of the *Constitutionnel* and vendor of "*la pâte de Regnaud,*" at which Scribe, Auber, Halévy, and many other celebrities were present. During the evening, the conversation turning on an opera which Auber had just completed, the composer was entreated to play something out of the new work. Auber sat down at the piano, played a magnificent march with which everybody was delighted, and the talk turned to other topics. Shortly afterwards one of the guests sidled up to Halévy, who was known to be at work on his opera of "Charles VI.," and begged him to favour them in his turn with a specimen of his forthcoming production. In the most affable manner the *maestro* acceded to the request and placed himself before the instrument. Instead, however, of playing anything of his own, to the astonishment of

all present, and by a wonderful effort of memory, Halévy repeated as it appeared, note for note, Auber's magnificent march which they had all just heard for the first time. A clamour of ejaculations and compliment arose at the end of this feat. "He has remembered every note, without change or omission," cried one. "Not quite," remarked Auber, "he has made several changes, and very happy ones, which I shall certainly adopt." A more delicate and refined interchange of coquettish flatteries could not be conceived—even between two rival beauties—is Madame Girardin's sarcastic comment. But admitted the insincerity of such mutual courtesies, how preferable are they to the bandying of contempt and insult, however honestly actuated!

That Balfe should be eager to follow up his success at the Opéra Comique is as natural as that the director of that establishment should be anxious to repeat so fortunate an experiment. A fresh libretto was not long in forthcoming, and this time the authors were MM. Leuwen and Brunswick, who, though not of equal eminence with Balfe's previous collaborators, were yet well experienced in this particular branch of dramatic work. The subject chosen was the old popular legend of the Charlemagne period, known as the story of "The Four Sons of Aymon."

On this he began to work assiduously, and its production was promised to succeed as soon as possible on the withdrawal of "Le Puits d'Amour," which, however, was still giving signs of a prolonged popularity.

In the meantime Balfe was casting wistful looks towards England, where he had left native opera with so piteous a prospect before it, a prospect which had not appeared to improve since, and seemed as yet to offer little chance of any opportunity to air his crop of fresh and foreign-gathered laurels. Not that there had been inactivity in the musical world; far from it, but what had taken place was not of a nature calculated to advance the interests of English composers. Madame Vestris had, during her short but brilliant reign over the fortunes of Covent Garden, engaged an operatic troupe, as was the ruinous custom with the managers of the large theatres, and had brought forward the great and versatile talent of Adelaide Kemble, but this engagement only gave occasion for the production of adaptations of foreign operas. The only important original work produced was a second opera by Rooke, entitled "Henrique, or the Pilgrims of Love" which achieved only a *succès d'estime*, and utterly failed to continue the vein of popularity opened by the composer's first opera, "Amilie."

At Drury Lane Mr. Macready, who on assuming the

lesseeship of that time-honoured temple of the drama, had grandly given out indications of a desire to foster the Muse of harmony as well as her sisters of the sock and buskin, engaging an operatic company embracing the highest available talent, failed to justify the hopes which this step had raised in the bosoms of the native geniuses of the day. Barnett, Macfarren, Loder, met with what is familiarly called "the cold shoulder," and nothing could satisfy the extremely classical predilections of Mr. Macready but to go back a century and disinter Handel's serenata, "Acis and Galatea," a most praiseworthy undertaking, no doubt, but somewhat reactionary, taken as the sum total of his efforts for the advancement of modern music. It probably was owing to some conscious misgivings to this effect that the manager determined to adorn the chaste simplicity of Handel's nymph with all the highest and most recent refinements and appliances of the scene-painters and machinists' art, as represented by Robert Stanfield, R.A., and the late Mr. Bradwell, the head machinist of the establishment, and then to hand her over to the ruthless culinary treatment of Mr. Tom Cooke, the orchestral chef (the punning is accidental) of Drury Lane. Though the work was thus mutilated, and but imperfectly executed, the all-conquering genius of Handel, allied to

the admirable painting of Stanfield, obtained for the work a sufficient degree of public attention to constitute a success, but it was not such a success as to induce the manager to proceed in this retrogressive search after the classical in operatic matters.

The subsequent efforts of Mr. Macready in devising employment for his singers were directed to the old resource of bringing forth *tant bien que mal* vamped-up English versions of foreign operas already provided with the stamp of universal acceptance, and though the current coin to which he thus resorted was sadly clipped and defaced by the hands through which it passed, he contrived to pay his way with it. Among the works so produced was a new version of "La Gazza Ladra," there having been several before, but none perhaps so curiously illustrative as this of the barbarous treatment to which foreign composers were submitted. Rossini's music not being considered adequate to the illustration of Scribe's story of the maid of Palaiseau, additional pieces were foisted in from Donizetti's "Roberto Devereux," besides other interpolations taken out of "Otello;" all being still the triumphant handiwork of Mr. T. Cooke. This was in January, 1843. Another remarkable and comparatively laudable attempt to sustain himself in the operatic field at the same high standard as in the drama, was

made soon after by Mr. Macready, when he placed in English dress the "Sappho" of Pacini upon the stage of Drury Lane, with a cast which embraced the names of Clara Novello, Mrs. Alfred Shaw, Phillips, and Allen. The book was the work of Mr. Serle, a dramatist now forgotten, but whose good taste and accomplished mastery of his own language secured a libretto of unusual merit. Strange to say, this performance attracted one or two brilliant and crowded audiences, and was repeated several successive nights, though of course it failed to conciliate the popular taste, utterly unprepared for music of that class.

All this looked discouraging enough to Balfe's hopes of obtaining an English hearing of his new French comic opera, for though he was *pro tem.* foreign, he was not yet classical. But, fortunately for him, an entirely new and unknown manager had during his absence descended as it were from the clouds, and alighted on the then newly-built theatre in Oxford Street, which since Hamlet the jeweller had ruined himself in erecting it, had languished without a tenant. The brave individual who had the courage to become that forlorn hope in theatrical affairs, the manager of a newly-built theatre, was Mr. Maddox, whose native shrewdness—the subject of many an amusing anecdote—combined with a practical knowledge of the

business of theatrical management and considerable acquaintance with musical matters, gathered during a wandering life abroad, enabled him to keep himself afloat as the manager of the Princess's Theatre during a series of years, and to retire eventually with a moderate fortune. Mr. Maddox devoted his theatre mainly to the production of foreign operas with English words, and his experience and undoubted judgment enabled him to discover and to bring before the English public a succession of continental artists, who as leading singers maintained the standard of the performances at a fairly high level. Through this well-conducted enterprise the English public were made acquainted with a large number of productions of the French and Italian stage, always adequately and often admirably executed, which otherwise they would have had no opportunity of hearing, save in a few rare instances, and then only in a mutilated form. Not a few original works by English composers saw the light through the existence of such an establishment so managed, as also it afforded a field for new executive talent which the most ambitious aspirant need not have despised, Miss Pyne having made her début and won her firs wreaths under this management. Not a little of the efficiency, good taste, and judgment displayed in this

enterprise was due to the conductorship of Signor Schira.

Under Mr. Maddox's cosmopolite and hospitable roof did Balfe find a welcome after his first Parisian campaign, and in a short time arrangements were made for the adaptation of "Le Puits d'Amour" to the English stage, and its production on the boards of the Princess's Theatre. As a sort of reminder to the forgetful public, and a credential for his new work, his opera of "The Siege of Rochelle" was first revived, and being excellently mounted, and having moreover the advantage of his own singing as Michel, and that of Madame Balfe as the heroine, it revived Balfe's popularity at once, and effectively prepared the way for the latest born of his musical progeny, which appeared in the month of August, 1843, under the title of "Geraldine, or the Lover's Well," the English version having been, I believe, executed by Gilbert à Becket, who at that time and subsequently was of great assistance to Mr. Maddox in furnishing creditable adaptations of foreign operas. The principal parts were sustained by Madame Eugenie Garcia (a cousin of the renowned sisters), Mr. Barker, Mr. Allen, and Paul Bedford, who had not at that time regularly settled down into a low comedian. It was by no means a strong cast, and a sad contrast was exhibited

to that of the Opéra Comique. Nevertheless, with the advantage of Balfe's superintendence, the execution of the opera presented a fair *ensemble*, and its graceful, sparkling, and frequently tender music reached the ears of the public sufficiently undeteriorated by its interpreters to result in a complete and genuine success.

How thoroughly favourable was the impression of "Geraldine" on the popular taste, can be measured pretty accurately by the outpouring of abuse which it provoked from the musical critics to whom Balfe's popularity and success were as the scarlet cloak of the matador flaunted in the eyes of the foaming bull. To look back at these effusions, as I have done, fills one with astonishment, that persons capable of expressing themselves in the language of educated men should have allowed the paltriest jealousy and the most short-sighted malice to have overcome in them all sense of decency, all dictates of prudent judgment, all habits of ordinary courtesy, to say nothing of common respect for truth. In the teeth of the high estimate pronounced by foreign critics, despite their natural jealousy of an interloper, Balfe's last opera was uncompromisingly declared void of all merit, without a tune or a passage that could be remembered —"one of the feeblest operas ever produced, the great

success of which was to be regretted rather than rejoiced at." In these effusions, however, it was too evident that what aggrieved the writers of them most was that Balfe had alone among the English composers of the day followed up one success with another, and then another, and gave no signs of exhaustion; but, on the contrary, seemed bent on commanding and maintaining a foremost position by a rapid series of unflagging efforts, supported by extraordinary powers of labour and a vein of inspiration never at fault. The allusions to the fortune that favoured him to the exclusion of fifty others his equals, suffering unmerited neglect, rendered too patent from what source flowed the bitterness that would have envenomed the bite of these snarlers, but that the distillations of disappointed mediocrity could never rise to the dignity of poison. Serious criticism, a sober analysis of the production impugned, indicating calmly and with moderation where taste was offended, where sound rules of art violated, was never attempted; otherwise Balfe could hardly have survived the deliberate proof of his enormous deficiencies. Sweeping denunciation was mixed up with that sort of pedantic and technical carping I have already described, and the public who read these diatribes, disgusted with their offensive tone and ridiculous affectation of profundity, turned only

the more staunchly to their object. But though these evidences of malignity on the part of those from whom the successful composer should have expected the warmest support and encouragement did not affect his material prosperity, or his high reputation with the world at large, it was a source of uneasy reflection that would have made a cynic of a less genial man, that he must henceforth seek for that mutual recognition and regard of brother artists, so valuable to all who genuinely pursue and love art for its own sake, among foreigners alone. At home the smile of greeting and the flattering speech of his fellow-workmen would be only the mask of concealed hatred and smouldering malignity.

CHAPTER VII.

THE incessant activity which was so characteristic an element of Balfe's nature might be expected to be at its highest in this year, 1843, when he had attained his thirty-fifth year, and was "*nel mezzo camin della sua vita;*" and that it was so, no less than that this period was the culminating point of his great natural powers—his gift of melody, his vivid faculty of imagination—is abundantly indicated by his labours in that year, when, besides writing perhaps the most charming and graceful of all his works, "Les Quatre Fils Aymon," he completed "The Bohemian Girl," generally regarded as the "flower of the flock" of all his progeny; finding time, moreover, to superintend the production of "Geraldine," and being busily employed during the summer as an actor and singer both in London and on a provincial tour with a concert company organized by Messrs. Beale and Cramer.

The book of "The Bohemian Girl" had been supplied to Balfe by Alfred Bunn immediately after their previous collaboration in "The Maid of Artois," and much of the music had been written previously to the events which caused the composer's emigration to Paris, the manuscript being deposited with a London publisher on his departure. It was, however, on his return completely revised, and several new pieces written afresh in the place of others for which he had other use. This latter statement is on the authority of Mr. G. Macfarren, who makes it in a biographical sketch written for the "Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography," in which he treats his brother composer with decided candour and courtesy, but with a considerable admixture withal of contemptuous disparagement. It is added that the music so abstracted from the score of "The Bohemian Girl" was appropriated to his French opera, where it proved ineffective; while two of the songs rewritten in the place of these diverted compositions proved the most successful in the opera. I cannot say how far this statement is true: it probably may have some foundation; but it is evidently made less with a view to convey a practical lesson, than to exhibit Balfe as composing his operas at haphazard, little heeding the fitness of the situation into which he thrust his melodies, their

eventual success being a mere matter of good fortune due to their intrinsic prettiness and catching quality, not to their dramatic colour and adaptation to the scene. That the inference is not stretched will be obvious to any one who will take the trouble to read the whole biography and note its general spirit.

It was fortunate in one respect that Balfe's collaborator should have been the whilom manager of Drury Lane, although, when that potentate was dethroned, it certainly appeared very much otherwise, as none could have foreseen his speedy restoration, and except author and manager should again become united in his august person, there seemed little chance of their joint production coming forth to the world in the existing state of things. Very much, however, to everybody's astonishment, notwithstanding his previous egregious mismanagement and colossal bankruptcy, perhaps on that very account, so is the world constituted, Bunn was again accepted as a tenant by the Drury Lane Committee, and once more ascended the managerial throne. This time, accepting a warning from the past, Bunn restricted his scheme to purely operatic performances, accompanied by ballet. The theatre opened on Michaelmas-day, and for the commencement of the campaign "The Siege of Rochelle" was once more revived. As efficient a company as

could be collected was engaged, and the orchestra, together with the musical conductorship of the entire enterprise, was confided to Julius Benedict. To Balfe's first opera succeeded an adaptation of Donizetti's "Favorita," and the celebrated Duprez was engaged to appear in his original part.

On the 27th of November was produced "The Bohemian Girl," the libretto of which had been founded by its author with considerable dramatic tact on a ballet, in three acts, by St. Georges, entitled "La Gipsy," which had appeared in 1839 at the Grand Opera in Paris with music by no less than three composers, one to each act, Benoist, Ambroise Thomas, and Marliani. The subject, originally taken from one of the "Novelas Exemplares" of Cervantes, had, however, been dramatically used before, being identical with that of Weber's "Preciosa." The greatest pains were taken, as may be imagined, the manager and librettist being one, in placing the opera on the stage, and a cast was secured by which a thoroughly efficient execution of the music was combined with effective acting. Miss Romer was the original Arline; Mr. Harrison, then in the prime of his vocal powers and making great progress as an actor, was Thaddeus; Miss Betts, an experienced singer and actress, the Gipsy Queen; Stretton, Devilshoof; Borrani and

Duruset made up the list of dramatis personæ. There is no occasion to dwell on the merits of this, the best known of all Balfe's works, or to insist on the reception it met with and the enduring popularity into which it leapt at one bound. The incredibly short time in which its melodies were snatched up and repeated to the echoes through every medium of sound-utterance athwart the land, has never been equalled even in these days of facile popularity, for the strains that captivate the lighter fancy of the million. "The heart bowed down with weight of woe," "I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls," and "When other lips and other hearts," beat upon the ear night and day like the waves of the restless ocean, till, as the natural penalty—the Nemesis of success—the wearied listener wished the buoyant Arion at the bottom of the sea.

This time the croaking voice of detraction was literally drowned in the flood of harmony, or hypocritically joined (though in harsh and hesitating tones of forced accordance) the chorus of approval. That the grace and beauty of this latest offspring of the prolific muse of Balfe were no fleeting gifts, shallow endowments dependent on the freshness of their bloom and to be easily brushed off by a little wear, leaving behind a commonplace and insignificant

residuum to make posterity wonder at the strange charm of mere novelty, was soon made apparent. The solid substratum on which these captivating charms rested, and the fact that the commanding attraction of the work was the result of its coherence with the laws of all beauty, added to the possession, moreover, of that intrinsic and special stamp of character which alone can give permanence to the myriad forms of harmony and proportion, have eventually been proved beyond cavil by the event. The opera has been translated in every European language, and performed in every theatre of some note or standing where operatic music is known. In Germany, where the public are not, that I am aware, led away by hasty and ignorant workmanship, or careless and frivolous inspiration—the artistic delinquencies with which Balfe is taxed—this work maintains an increasing hold on the public, notwithstanding their possession of Weber's work on the same subject, of which little has been allowed to survive save the overture.

Having thus seen his latest argosy, and hitherto the most richly laden of all, thus fairly launched amidst popular acclaim, and speeding on her long and prosperous course, Balfe now turned his face once more towards Paris, where his second work for the Opéra Comique would soon be placed in rehearsal;

though the career of "Le Puits d'Amour" was not yet closed, having been continuously performed during his absence, with the exception of a short interval occasioned by the illness of Madame Thillon, ever since its first appearance; and when he arrived in Paris, in January, 1844, it was still in the bills, and remained there till shortly before the production of "Les Quatre Fils Aymon," on the 29th of July. Before entering into any particulars as to the latter work, it may be interesting to mention that with "The Bohemian Girl" commenced the receipt of remuneration by Balfe in any degree adequate to the money value of his works, or to the labour, study, and high endowments implied in their production.* Hence from this time he is enabled to devote himself exclusively to the culture of his art and the creation of fresh works, undisturbed by those distracting incursions into the field of the mere virtuoso or executive artist, which tended to diminish his energies and gave a hold to the spite of his enemies, who incessantly strove to place him in the light of a frivolous and crudely prepared adventurer in the composer's province, seeking profit only, and careless of

* Messrs. Chappell paid 400*l.* for the copyright of "The Bohemian Girl," which was subsequently increased by another 100*l.* Bunn from the same firm obtained 100*l.* for the use of his words.

lasting fame or the permanent interests of art. Nay, one critic, exasperated apparently by the rapid reiteration of his successes, openly charges him with the exclusive pursuit of "pelf," observing that he was sufficiently callous to admit himself the soft impeachment, and crowning the whole offensive attack with the incredible expression applied to one brother in the craft by another—for the whole tenour of the article implied that the writer was himself a musician —of spitting in the face of Art. I am induced to revive facts like these, which it would have been more agreeable to leave in oblivion, as a warning to what lamentable excesses the unwatched indulgence of this spirit of jealous detraction will lead, as there are indications that neither the feeling itself nor the malice it fosters has diminished in intensity, or gained in the choiceness of its rhetoric.

After such a protracted series of careful and assiduous rehearsals, as it is the laudable custom of French artists to devote to the preparation of a new work, and rather more than the usual number of postponements, the first production of "Les Quatre Fils Aymon" at length took place on July the 9th, and with a result as completely, if not as brilliantly successful, as had attended its predecessor. Balfe having no longer the advantage this time of Madame Anna Thillon's beauty

and exquisite singing to add a dazzling prestige to the intrinsic merits of his music, it was fortunate that those intrinsic merits were even higher than in the work with which he had first faced the judgment of a Parisian public. His prima donna was Madame Darcier, who never achieved any very high position; Moeker being the tenor, and Thermann the baritone. The verdict of musicians throughout Europe has pronounced this opera one of the most characteristic, charming, and dramatically complete inspirations of its composer, and its impression on the audience, unheightened by any special and adventitious graces imparted by the executants, confirmed Balfe in the regard of his foreign patrons, who are nevertheless somewhat apt to make amends for any appearance of over-graciousness in their reception of new talent, by summarily confounding the favourite of one day by the humiliation of the next. Seldom as it is allowed to mortals even to deserve success twice in succession in the same arena, Balfe achieved the feat of a second time winning the approval of a French audience, and in that peculiar class of production for which they claim, as it were, an exclusive patent signed by the hand of Nature. Genius, however, is of no country, nor is the vein of light and airy invention in music the peculiar appanage of any

nation. On the other hand, that Balfe made no slavish concessions to the mere conventionalities of what is called the style of the Opéra Comique, is evidenced in the fact that his work has gained popularity outside of the special atmosphere of "La Salle Favart," removed from which so many creations that flourish there so vivaciously lose all their charm.

While attending to the production of this opera, and yielding with zest to all the allurements of the gay and brilliant society to which Balfe found easy admission through his renown, no less than the social qualities that rendered him a welcome guest wherever high spirits allied with courteous manners, good-humoured pleasantry, and the most candid appreciation of others' merits are valued, he was according to his wont industriously applying himself to work, and fairly adjusting the balance of toil and pleasure. Faithful to his old collaborator, who if his poetry was not the purest and most sparkling distillation of the Castalian fount, was under existing circumstances a sure passport to public representation, for the manager's muse was not likely to be left out in the cold while his reign lasted, Balfe was employed on another libretto from Alfred Bunn, which eventually bore the title of "The Daughter of St. Mark," and

was founded on the book of a French opera, "La Reine de Cypre," written by M. de St. Georges for Halévy, and produced some three years previously in Paris at the Grand Opera. It was for the preparation of this work for the stage, and also to superintend the production of a translation of his last written work at the Princess's Theatre, that he now returned to London, where he found that his "Bohemian Girl," after a run of sixty nights, had gracefully given place to an opera by Julius Benedict, which, during several years giving rise to a series of anticipatory paragraphs, at length came forth triumphantly to the world to give emphatically the lie to the old proverb, "too many cooks spoil the broth." The libretto of this work had been successively modelled and remodelled by at least three poets—George Linley, the original author; Planché, and lastly, Chorley; but the Benedictine broth was too good to be spoiled by this multiplicity of culinary adepts, and the opera, under the title of "The Brides of Venice," was completely successful, giving to the world a number of charming melodies, among which, "By the sad sea waves," have survived, with that lasting vitality that belongs to all such genuine and unmanufactured inspirations.

In the month of November in the same year,

on the re-opening of Drury Lane Theatre, "The Daughter of St. Mark" was brought forward, and in the same month "The Four Sons of Aymon," in its English garb, was introduced to the London public at Mr. Maddox's theatre. The success of the latter work was satisfactory, although it had not the advantage of a very powerful cast, a Miss Condell, a débutante, being entrusted with the leading soprano part, and the remaining principal characters being supported by Allen, Charles Horn, a son of the celebrated composer and singer, and Leffler, already in his decline. Of Balfe's new opera, the next chapter will record the little that has to be said about it, as it was eclipsed by the still subsisting popularity of "The Bohemian Girl."

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT the harsh severity of criticism and premeditated systematic attacks verging in their virulence, nay, in some instances, as I have shown, actually trenching on, personal abuse, to which Balfe was exposed at the outset of his English career as an operatic composer, was beginning to abate its most offensive features, there were shown symptoms in the treatment of "The Daughter St. Mark" by the lofty school of critics. Priggish pedantry, fastidious dilettanteism, and the malice of professional envy, had apparently barked and snarled themselves hoarse around the new and persistently successful phenomenon, and a sort of grumbling acquiescence in the accomplished fact succeeded to the storm of critical reprobation. The new opera was pronounced to be in many respects a satisfactory treatment of the libretto, and at any rate decidedly superior to Halévy's "Reine de Cypre," condemned as the heaviest and dullest work

of the composer. This was not much; but it was something not to be assailed with hard words out of the grammar of counter-point, or pilloried as an impudent adventurer. Probably the tide of success which was still flowing and bearing the popular "Bohemian Girl" triumphantly on to its hundredth night, rendered it an unfavourable moment to continue the attempted depreciation of one who had so decidedly possessed himself of the ear of the public in every sense of the phrase. It was indeed a fact of no slight significance, that in the year following that of its production, this opera attained its century of representations. Taking into consideration the interruptions in its career caused by the closing of the theatre at the termination of each season, and the production of other works, it argued a tenacity of hold on the popular taste far more remarkable than would be the import of the like fact in these days of long runs, when London audiences are fed by such voluminous streams from the provinces.

It is not extraordinary, therefore, that an event so impressive should have been commemorated by the friends of Balfe, through the most readily available expedient which the manners and customs of these islands have sanctioned as the most orthodox mode of expressing enthusiasm or admiration towards any

selected individual—namely, the presentation of a testimonial. Like most orthodox things, however, it is liable to be overdone, and the extreme frequency of these amiable, and certainly to one party agreeable demonstrations, accompanied by the extreme tenuity of the motives from which they occasionally spring, have brought them decidedly within fair scope of the shots of the envious or satirical. In these days of electrotyping and social charlatanism, a very little silver and a very little merit will cover a multitude of plate. In this instance, however, there could be no doubt that not only had the inevitable teapot and its accompaniments been fairly earned by the recipient, but there could be no misconception as to the disinterested motives of the donors, who were represented by the witty and good-humoured Sir Henry Webbe, the President of the Testimonial Committee, an enthusiastic lover and intelligent judge of music, and the late Mr. St. Leger, Balfe's faithful and intimate friend; but alas! feeble and faithless biographer, in whose reminiscences of the object of his admiration I have looked in vain for any solid assistance in my task. The ceremony of presentation took place on the stage of Drury Lane at the close of the hundredth performance of "The Bohemian Girl," on the 7th of December, 1844, Balfe taking his benefit on the same

evening. The composer was led on the stage by the illustrious lessee and librettist, Alfred Bunn, whose speech, as the mouthpiece of the body of plate-bestowers—their humorous President might have called them an Argentine Republic—was, as might be expected, a double-barrelled discharge of compliments, one barrel of which was entirely reserved for himself and considerably more than half of the other, together with the entire recoil. The curtain then rose, and with theatrical effect displayed to the view disposed in glittering array the various articles composing the gift, which, from the list before me, appears to have really been a very handsome and valuable one. In the service was included a kettle, on which was engraven an inscription recording the date and circumstances of the presentation of the testimonial "to Mr. M. W. Balfe, the composer of eleven successful operas in London." It being remarked in the presence of the late Gilbert à Becket that it seemed odd to present an Irishman with a tea-service, that ingenious punster replied, he supposed it was in allusion to the Bohea-mian Girl.

Before leaving the subject of the original appearance of this opera, which few can doubt will remain to posterity, if not as the composer's chef-d'œuvre in point of serious mastery over the art of operatic composi-

tion in all the depth and breadth of its almost infinite capabilities, yet as the brightest and most spontaneous example of his melodic inspiration, I cannot forbear quoting from a biographical notice which appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* immediately after Balfe's death, the following genial and felicitous description of the writer's long-retained impression of the first night of "The Bohemian Girl."

"Thirty years, very nearly, have since elapsed, but at the recollection of that first night those thirty years no longer intervene. Youth is ours again as we recal to mind the incidents of the evening. Balfe, having been cheered to the echo immediately upon his entrance into the orchestra as conductor, has just hushed the crowded house into silence at last with the tap of his bâton on his music-stand, and the graceful overture has commenced. Woven into it, here and there, are preliminary hints of the melodies that so soon are to become audible in their integrity, and that have since been so enduringly familiar. Very notable, indeed, among the anticipatory relishes of the coming feast of sound thus afforded by the overture, was the blithe animated chorus of the gipsies, heard at intervals, running like a refrain through the opera to the rattle of the castanets, and to the patter of the

dancing feet of the Bohemians; singing—don't we all remember to what riant air?—

'Come with the gipsy's bride,
And repair
To the fair!'

When at the close of the repetition of the whole overture, which had been rapturously encored, and would even have been redemanded but that the curiosity of the audience restrained its enthusiasm, the curtain rose and the opera commenced. Balfe, who had already for some time been living rejoicingly in the sunshine, was lifted that night on the topmost wave of popularity. The three acts went like a signal for three times three. The principal artists were in the vein, had the right cue, were in excellent voice. Miss Rainforth as Arline, Harrison as Thaddeus, Borrani as the Count, Stretton as Devilshoof. Repetitions were the order of the night, and were demanded in no instance doubtfully, rather than that, it should be said with an unanimity of acclamation. Repeated thus, ballad after ballad, verse after verse, were listened to and learnt delightedly by those whose memories were most retentive. The chief pearls thus string together belonged thenceforth quite equally to those who listed. They hardly require enumeration. The melody of each, with a gracious beauty of its own,

chimes even now quite as freshly as it did upon the morrow of that evening, nearly thirty years gone by, upon our remembrance! Immediately upon waking that next morning, at the breakfast hour, and afterwards in snatches during the afternoon, the charming melodies heard for the first time overnight came back, now in fragments, now completely to recollection, haunting the memory—hummed in the streets. 'A thing of beauty' each, and as such, according to Keats' philosophy, 'a joy for ever.' Who does not remember them to this hour; the feeble, often preposterous words, and the delicious music? One while the joyous song of the soprano—

'I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls
With vassals and serfs at my side.'

Another, the melancholy reverie of the bass—

'The heart bowed down by weight of woe.'

The tenor's love-song beginning—

'When other lips and other hearts
Their tales of love may tell.'

Its every verse ending with impassioned tenderness, 'Then you'll remember me.' Very soon indeed after the opera's production, air after air from it, like 'The voice of the turtle was heard in the land,' warbled to countless pianos, whistled by the errand boys at the area railings, ground upon the barrel-organs at the street corners."

But it is time to return to "The Daughter of St. Mark," which as the immediate successor of the still-reigning favourite, "The Bohemian Girl," to use a self-contradictory expression which exactly represents the situation, could not be expected to achieve a success even commensurate with its merits. Nevertheless, it drew a succession of brilliant audiences, and was admitted not to have diminished the composer's popularity—to advance it would have been as impossible as it was unnecessary. This work was the means of introducing to the public the late Mr. Weiss, whom Balfe had met in Dublin, and induced to come to London, where his rapid rise in his career justified the opinion Balfe had formed of his sound qualities as a musician, and his capabilities as an artist when developed by practice. Mr. Weiss became the legitimate successor of Henry Phillips, both on the stage and as an oratorio singer, and his premature death has left a blank in the ranks of English dramatic singers which cannot be said to have been filled up. Of the music of "The Daughter of St. Mark" there still survives the never-fading ballad, "We may be happy yet," the popularity of which equalled, if not surpassed, that of the tenor song in the previous opera. It is recorded by Mr. St. Leger, in the somewhat fugitive chapters he has devoted to

the memory of his friend, that the melody originally written to these immortal words was found on trial unsuitable to Harrison's voice. Balfe therefore undertook to write another, and an inspiration suggesting itself to his teeming invention, at an advanced hour of the night, it was nevertheless resolved, in the anxiety of the composer's mind, that Harrison should be consulted about it at once. Balfe forthwith scored the melody for the pianoforte, and handed it to St. Leger, who was present and undertook to convey it to the tenor; but on reaching his residence, this joyful messenger of the just delivered muse found the house shut up, and all the inmates retired to rest save Harrison, who was however preparing to follow their example, and on hearing a knocking at the door, protruded his head from the window to ascertain who his untimely visitor might be. The reply "We may be happy yet," brought the tenor downstairs, and admitting St. Leger, he sat down to the piano and sang over the new-born melody, waking the hushed echoes of Margaret Street with a strain they were destined to repeat, Heaven knows how often! the shade of Babbage could alone calculate, though voiced by a less agreeable "organ." Often as the refrain of this ballad has been playfully quoted, it never received a more quaint and striking application than

that recorded by Planché to have been made by the composer of the music when visiting the grave of Alfred Bunn. After gazing at it a moment, he exclaimed, "Well, never mind, Alfred, we may be happy yet." That the reference was solemnly meant, despite its apparent levity and irreverence, I am assured, or would not give the anecdote a place here, and to appreciate the earnestness of the thought beneath the outward form of a jest, it must be remembered that Bunn and Balfe by the faith they professed were both believers in purgatory.

The year 1844 thus closed triumphantly enough for a composer in whom the shoal of super-scientific and hyper-æsthetical critics had found nothing whatever to deserve the fiat of their august approbation. Very nearly at the same time, if not simultaneously, three successful operas of his were occupying the attention of the public of London, while Paris was still echoing with the plaudits that awaited his second attempt to please them in their own peculiar *genre* of the Opéra Comique. But Balfe was not inclined to repose on his laurels; he was no disciple of the *dolce far niente* school, like his friend and early patron Rossini, who was wont to say, "*le repos c'est ma seule passion,*" and once remarked to the young composer, full of projects for the future, "*si vous aimez à travailler*

autant que j'aime à ne rien faire, vous irez loin." Untiringly, active by nature, he could not let his invention lie fallow long, and, moreover, one long-cherished object of his ambition was now within his grasp, and to reach it with success he was bending all his faculties. The management of the Grand Opera of Paris had offered him the libretto of an opera for that world-renowned establishment, and on this he was busily at work in the early part of the year 1845. The importance of this event in the eyes of Balfe, at the time being, was no doubt very disproportionate to its real influence on his subsequent rank and estimation. It was certainly a culminating point in his career; a consecration, so to speak, of his claim to be regarded as one of the ripest and most accomplished masters of his art; for he was invited to display his capabilities in an arena which the greatest composers of the time had considered the fittest wherein to produce the highest achievements of their genius, and thence to address, as it were, the entire world. Yet though his "L'Etoile de Séville" was perfectly successful, being performed for twenty nights in succession, and only interrupted in its run by the sudden secession of the principal singer, Madame Stoltz, for some reason totally unconnected with the impression produced by the opera, it cannot be said

that its production at the Grand Opera placed Balfe in any higher or different position than he would have occupied had he never found himself so honoured. It is thus once more seen how little men really know what is in very fact and truth an important or desirable object to attain, and adds another illustration to give point to Juvenal's question—

> "Quid ratione timenuis,
> Aut caprinus?"

It was while busily engaged superintending the rehearsals of this opera that an event occurred which was to be of far more practical weight in the future fortunes of Balfe than the realization of this much cherished object of his ambition, and like so many of the turns in his many winding life-path, it came upon him with unexpected suddenness, and all the striking effect of a *coup de théâtre,* or an ingeniously projected incident in a sensational tale. One day after a rehearsal of his opera he was standing in that well-remembered tree-planted court-yard between the Rue Le Pelletier and Rue Drouot, chatting with Signor Gardoni, Baroilhet, and other artists engaged in the cast of his forthcoming opera, when his attention became gradually attracted to a mysterious personage muffled up to the eyes in a travelling cloak, and standing near the *entrée des artistes,* where he

watched the composer with an intentness that at some period of his chequered life might have been alarming. However, Balfe at that time was happily in no fear of duns, and therefore half annoyed at an apparent impertinence, half in curiosity, he walked straight up to the stranger and inquired whether he had any business with him.

Still preserving his melodramatic air of mystery, the muffled apparition replied, "Walk a little way with me up the Boulevard, and I will tell you what I want, and who I am." Accordingly on they sauntered round the corner of the Rue Drouot to the Boulevard, and the mysterious stranger as they proceeded disclosed, as he had promised, first his identity, and subsequently his errand; and Balfe, much to his surprise, learned that his "interlocutor," as the novel writers say, was no other than the, at that time, well-known M. de la Bellinaye, who as the secretary and general factotum of Mr. Benjamin Lumley, in his capacity of lessee of Her Majesty's Theatre, was much mixed up with the inner history of that once glory-encircled establishment.

Balfe, who had been intimately acquainted with this gentleman's family, was naturally perplexed at his presenting himself in this strange and mysterious fashion, and asked what it all meant.

"I want you to come over to London for a few days," was the reply.

"What for?"

"I cannot tell you till we arrive there."

"It's altogether impossible, my dear sir. My new opera is in full rehearsal—I cannot leave the theatre."

"You had better do as I tell you. Be advised by a friend. This matter will decide your position in your own country, and vastly increase your reputation."

"All this is very surprising!" exclaimed Balfe. "You surely can give me some hint."

"Not a word. Mum!" said De la Bellinaye in a hushed tone, and placing his finger longitudinally across his lips.

"Well then," said Balfe, suddenly making his mind up to the blind venture, like a child that is told to open its mouth and shut its eyes, "I'll ask permission for four days' absence, and devote my congé to a journey with you back to London."

"Do it at once then," replied De la Bellinaye, "and we shall start this evening for England. I have a carriage at the hotel."

The next day Balfe was in London, but still without the remotest notion for what weighty purpose he had been thus abruptly and secretly summoned

away from occupations which to him seemed of paramount importance. On the following morning De la Bellinaye called and conducted Balfe to Mr. Lumley's managerial residence in Pall Mall, and the ceremony of introduction over, the director of Her Majesty's Theatre offered the conductorship of the Italian Opera to the astonished composer.

"You must allow me to speak to Mr. Costa before I give my answer," was Balfe's reply after a moment's reflection on the unexpected proposal. "I must ascertain his feelings on the subject; he and I are on very cordial terms, and I must not do anything of which he would have a right to complain."

This stipulation was met with an immediate protest against any communication whatever with the ex-conductor of Her Majesty's Opera; it would be utterly futile, moreover, as Mr. Costa could never again resume his post under any circumstances whatever; and if Balfe did not sign the engagement offered to him that very morning, another gentleman —a celebrity—was prepared to occupy the position. A quixotic sacrifice to delicacy in so important a conjuncture to Balfe's interests would have been ridiculous and even blameable; so, asking no further question, he at once appended his signature to the document presented to him and lost no time in

returning to Paris. Thus did Balfe become conductor of Her Majesty's Theatre.

"L'Etoile de Séville" was duly produced on the 17th of December of that year (1845) and obtained a complete success; but, as before stated, Madame Stoltz, the reigning prima donna, yielding to some mysterious motives, after the fashion of too many of her class, suddenly abdicated a power that had seemed unlimited, and the prosperous course of Balfe's grand opera was arrested in mid-career. The director of the opera house, moreover, M. Leon Pillet, found himself immediately after involved in difficulties, which obliged him to bring his administration to a close, and the misadventure became irreparable. Balfe having therefore nothing more to detain him in Paris, proceeded straight to London, this time not secretly and involved in the meshes of one of those dark machinations to which operatic managers, like miniature monarchs, have so often recourse for "reasons of state," but openly, and in the eye of day, or rather under the glare of the chandelier, to assume his new part. I must not omit to mention that, though absent bodily from London during the greater part of 1845, his spirit was melodiously present clothed in the music of his fifteenth opera "The Enchantress," which he had

composed to a libretto, written originally and expressly for him by St. George, and converted from the French language into English vocables by the inevitable Bunn, to whose Mezentian collaboration the tyranny of circumstances so frequently and fatally condemned him.

Balfe's first appearance as conductor of the orchestra of Her Majesty's Theatre was made on Tuesday evening, the 3rd of March, 1846, and the triumphant reception he met with from the crowded and fashionable audience assembled on that momentous occasion was a tribute to the composer's merits and recognised position of which he might well be proud. Never was greeting more enthusiastic and hearty, never demonstration of awarded honour more splendid. No doubt that this magnificent display of feeling was to a certain degree intensified by the circumstances of the occasion, when party animosity with respect to the causes which had led to a change in the occupant of the conductor's chair was at its highest point among the habitués and supporters of the opera; but that far the greater part of it might be appropriated by Balfe to the estimation in which he was held personally and as a musician was equally beyond doubt, and was in fact clearly demonstrated on a subsequent occasion when, having through some cause been absent from

his seat during two or three successive performances, his reappearance in the orchestra was the signal for a greeting scarcely, if at all, inferior to that which has been just recorded. The season commenced with Verdi's "Nino" (or "Nabuco") given on that occasion for the first time in England, and the performance was remarkable for the début of two new *cantatrici*, Mdlle. Corbari and Mdlle. Sanchioli; the former to become a great favourite, both for her personal charms and fresh and sweet voice; the other to disappear without fulfilling the promise which, despite certain defects of manner and some inexperience, was entertained of her. On the same night was produced a new ballet by Perrot, "Catarina, ou la Fille du Bandit," the cast of which included Lucile Grahn, Louise Taglioni, and Petit Stephan. At the close of the opera the curtain was no sooner down than Balfe's name was vociferated from every part of the house, and the new conductor was led on by Mr. Lumley, to be hailed once more with the cheers and plaudits of the audience. The orchestra over which Balfe had control that year was the same celebrated "eighty" which his predecessor had employed all his skill and energy, over a space of many years, to bring into a perfectly homogeneous and unitedly working whole. Such splendid material was not, however, long to do the bidding of his bâton.

The tempest, which was already lowering and announcing its approach by dull and distant grumbling, was soon to break forth with astounding and terrible crash, shaking the foundations of Her Majesty's Theatre in a very uncomfortable and memorable manner.

One day Balfe, a little before the close of the season, was asked by Grisi into her room, and thus addressed :—

"Lumley has not spoken nor written a word to Mario or myself about next season. That does not astonish me, for I have been thinking for some time that he wants to get rid of us. Now you may tell him from me that we have a surprise in store for him —*voilà tout!*"

Here was matter to reflect upon, and whatever might be the actual import of this obscure announcement, it was evident it boded nothing pleasant. The solution of the enigma was not long withheld. On the last night of that ever memorable season of 1846, as Balfe was leaving the theatre the stage-door keeper, the historical Mr. Fish, called him aside and asked him if he had heard the news.

"What news?"

"All the orchestra and chorus have signed with Persiani's husband for next year."

"Signed?—for what and for where?" was Balfe's bewildered question.

"For a new Grand Italian Opera, to be opened next season. Grisi, Mario, and Tamburini are engaged, and Costa is to conduct."

Off went Balfe to announce the astounding revelation, as he believed for the first time, to the threatened impressario. The wily and politic Lumley received the agitated communication with a calm and august smile.

"Yes, I know all, and care for it—just nothing. They will find out their mistake in a very short time. I can strike such a blow in return as they little imagine. I have a new star who will take London by storm, and more than compensate me for the loss. You will find Jenny Lind alone will serve my turn better than all the rebels together. Find me an efficient orchestra and chorus, and I answer for the result."

During the recess Balfe devoted himself with all the zeal and activity that was in him to fulfil the injunctions of his manager, and duly measuring all the difficulties of his task, the band and chorus provided for the ensuing season of 1847 did the highest credit to his exertions, and again I cannot do better than

quote the writer of the necrological article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* already referred to, whose recognition of Balfe's services to the forsaken director is as gracefully expressed as it is in every respect just and truthful.

"With what consummate tact, taste, skill, discretion," says the writer, "and bright intelligence, he acquitted himself of this abruptly realized responsibility, is still vividly within the remembrance of many competent witnesses. The success which snatched the management of Her Majesty's, at that most critical period, from what threatened to bring about its seemingly all but inevitable destruction, is, in some measure, as it appears to us, as directly traceable to the masterly ability shown by Michael Balfe as the hurriedly chosen chef d'orchestre, as to the exceptional charm of voice and genius of the newly discovered prima donna Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale."

Until the abrupt closing of Her Majesty's Theatre in the year 1852, that is to say for a period of seven years, Balfe maintained the post thus unexpectedly thrust upon him, and maintained with undeniable efficiency, fidelity to his trust, and honour to himself. Year by year his ability as a chef d'orchestre extorted admiration and extended his reputation, while both with the public at large, and the subscribers whose

exacting fastidiousness was proverbial, he endeared himself more and more as a cherished favourite.

In the winter of the same year that witnessed Balfe's installation in his new and responsible post, was produced, on the 11th of December, at Drury Lane, and still with the enforced collaboration of its lessee, "The Bondman," the libretto of which was simply the operatic conversion of A. Dumas the elder's well known drama "Le Chevalier St. George," a subject the strong and strikingly developed interest of which inspired the composer to the production of a work which he himself ranked among his most solid and serious achievements, and which has been accepted as such in Germany, where it was soon after transplanted and still flourishes, to give the lie to Balfe's untiring, but latterly much discomfited detractors. The cast of this opera comprised the names of Miss Romer, Miss Rebecca Isaacs, Harrison, Weiss, and included a comic character for Harley.

CHAPTER IX.

THE year 1847 witnessed another attempt to found a national English Opera, and there was for some time an appearance that this problem was about to be taken out of the category of circle quadratures, perpetual motion findings, and other tempting but recognised impossibilities. The prime mover of the undertaking was the celebrated Monsieur Jullien, then at the height of his popularity, and whose recent promenade concerts at Covent Garden, by including in their programmes examples of the best and highest forms of music, had conciliated the regard of the lofty school towards one whom they had previously treated with sublime contempt as a paltry and ignorant charlatan, bent only on degrading the art, and pandering exclusively to the vulgarest and most frivolous tastes—an opinion which it was difficult to maintain after he had shown himself capable of conducting with the rarest knowledge,

sympathy, and practical skill the immortal masterpieces of the great composers, and both willing and able to cause them to be appreciated by the million, or as many of them as had ears for such ethereal fare. Sanguine and self-reliant to an excess, building vast schemes with extraordinary ingenuity and completeness, and seeing them in imagination completed at a stroke, it was not to be wondered at if Monsieur Jullien's prospectus exhibited the approach of a musical millennium. By an amalgamation with the Academy of Music, Drury Lane Theatre under his auspicious reign was to present a close reproduction of the connexion existing in Paris between the Grand Opera and the Académie de Musique. Creative and artistic genius was to be fostered in the one to expand in glory in the other. "Hope and competition will act as spurs to mental capacity, while Fortune and Fame will urge the aspirant onward to the goal now, for the first time, presented to his eyes." "Brave 'ords as you shall see in a summer's day;" and, indeed, the comparison between Monsieur Jullien's opera and its prototype was too like that between Macedon and Monmouth—"There is salmons in both;" but alas, none of the fish the enterprising Jullien expected came to his net—although his undertaking will be ever memorable in English musical

annals as having been instrumental to the first appearance on the stage of our great tenor, Mr. Sims Reeves, who made his début under this management as Edgar in an English version of "Lucia di Lammermoor."

I have adverted to this project of Monsieur Jullien's, which was destined to meet the fate of so many others with the like aim, notwithstanding a really hopeful start, in order simply to record that for it Balfe composed his next opera, "The Maid of Honour," written in conjunction with Fitzball, and the subject of which is identical with that of Flotow's "Marta." Although this opera was received by the critics with unusual favour and expressions of praise were awarded to it which were most unwonted, and contrasted singularly with previous verdicts (did they foresee the result?), it failed to maintain the prosperity of the theatre; and to its want of attraction, Mr. Planché attributes the ruin of Monsieur Jullien's enterprise, intimating that had the "Lucia di Lammermoor" continued its run, things would have been otherwise. An enterprise which cannot resist a single misadventure, however, could not be very solidly based, and it seems a gratuitous assumption to attribute to the production of Balfe's opera a change of fortune so complete, considering that Christmas, with the attractions of

the rival burlesques and pantomimes of that season was at hand (Monsieur Jullien produced an atrociously bad and egregiously expensive one by Alfred Crowquill and Albert Smith) to act as a far more potent cause of financial disturbance in the resources and calculations of the management. Of "The Maid of Honour,"* which contained an immense amount of spirited dramatic music—"graceful," "vigorous," and "sparkling" were the epithets applied to it even by severe judges—and provoked favourable comparisons with Auber; the two ballads, "Oh, smile as thou wert wont to smile," and "In this old chair my father sat," still survive.

In the course of this year Balfe accompanied as director a concert-giving tour, with Jenny Lind as soprano, and Gardoni as tenor. The Swedish Nightingale had just taken London by assault, and her progress through the various towns visited was a triumphal march. At the request of Jenny Lind, and expressly for this tour, Balfe composed for the display of the singer's powers a solo, "Ah forse in tal

* The principal parts in this opera were sustained by Messrs. Sims Reeves, Weiss, Miss Birch, and Miss Miran—the latter a most promising débutante and a sister of the talented actress Laura Addison. Both sisters, after raising the highest expectations of their future eminence, suddenly dropped from the firmament of art where they had appeared like twin stars—one dying in America, the other arrested in her career by a terrible visitation.

momento," consisting of a largo movement, followed by a cavatina and a cabaletta, which met with complete success, and served the object for which it was intended to admiration. "It is extremely graceful," says a contemporary criticism," and musician-like, and wonderfully well suited to her (Jenny Lind's) voice, which seemed to possess more than twice its ordinary power while she was singing it." Equally successful in their degree were a duet for the two stars, and an air, "Qual fior novello," for Gardoni, composed for the same occasion.

Between the production of "The Bondman" in 1846, and "The Maid of Honour" in the year 1847, "The Devil's In It" was produced at the Surrey Theatre, whither Miss Romer and Mr. Harrison had migrated a little time before to inaugurate a summer opera season, with a success which induced them to repeat the experiment for several years in succession. The subject of this opera was the same as that of Auber's "La Part du Diable," Scribe's lively and amusing libretto having been adapted, or adopted, without any material change by the English librettist, and from this time till the appearance of "The Sicilian Bride" at Drury Lane in 1852, Balfe's productivity for all that was outwardly manifested, seems to have undergone a period of "lying fallow,"

as far as relates to opera-writing. In 1849, at the close of the London season, Balfe paid a visit to Berlin, at the invitation of his then Royal Highness the Prince of Prussia, now His Imperial Majesty the doughty and renowned Emperor of Germany, and from this visit may be said to have commenced a new era in the composer's career, when he was destined to see his rare genius and brilliant capacity as a dramatic composer recognised throughout the Continent, with an eagerness of enthusiasm and an enlightened liberality of appreciation which was calculated to put to shame, if not to convert the carping crew who had so incessantly yelped at his heels in his own country.

On presenting himself before the Crown Prince, in accordance with this gracious invitation, he was received with condescending courtesy, and after some brief conversation conducted to the apartments of the late king and introduced to His Majesty, who showed himself no less gracious than his brother towards the English composer, and invited him to pass an evening at Charlottenburg, where Balfe was equally surprised and delighted to hear in the course of the selection of music, executed by the principal artists of the Court, several pieces from his own works. A few days after this mark of royal favour, the king was pleased to

intimate to the Director-General of the Court Opera, his desire that the theatre should be placed entirely at the disposal of Balfe in order to produce whatever opera of his he should think best suited to the purpose. This being done within a short period of Balfe's arrival in Berlin, he had the gratification of witnessing a performance of his opera of "The Bondman" under the title of "Der Mulatte," the completeness of which left nothing to be desired, and which was brilliantly successful. His Majesty attended the theatre, together with all the Court, and at the conclusion of the opera, sent for the composer to the royal box that he might receive from his own lips the expression of his unqualified pleasure at what he had heard. This was in January, 1850, and before Balfe took his departure for London, where he was engaged to conduct a series of national concerts at Her Majesty's Theatre, the king again gave orders that the theatre should be placed at Balfe's disposal for the following season.

The opera selected for the next year was "The Bohemian Girl," which was produced in January under the title of "Die Zigeunerinn" on the occasion of the king's birthday. The success of Balfe's favourite work was such that the king felt desirous of presenting the composer with some especial token of the high

estimation in which he was held, and accordingly the decoration of the Prussian Eagle was offered to Balfe, and would have been accepted with most unfeigned satisfaction but for the interference of the English Ambassador, a post then held by the Earl of Westmoreland, who informed the king that the presentation would be so much lost honour, a futile ceremony, as by the enlightened laws of this proud realm no English subject could accept a military order from a foreign potentate, even as the representative of harmony and concord—the harmless champion of music that soothes the savage breast. So poor Balfe had to go without his Eagle and content himself with reckoning on the never-to-be-hatched chicken of being some day knighted by the hand of his own sovereign, the only musical "Sir Michael" consecrated by her gracious hand being inconsistently enough a native of a foreign land. This is making honour anything but a "trim reckoning," as Falstaff calls it. There was a similar objection raised when the King of the French, Louis Philippe, after the success of the "Puits d'Amour" sought to confer on the composer the Cross of the Legion of Honour. This decoration however he subsequently obtained at the hands of another French monarch, the late Emperor Napoleon III.

In 1851 Balfe produced at Her Majesty's Theatre in London an Italian version of his French opera comique "Les Quatre Fils Aymon," under the title "I quatro Fratelli." The principal parts were allotted to Sophie Cruvelli, Madame Giuliani, Signori Gardoni and Colletti and M. Massol. In this new cast, and on a field so different from that for which it was intended, Balfe's work was nevertheless a success, although it was not repeated more than three times, having been brought out only a fortnight before the close of the season. The same year Balfe was invited to conduct the performance of his opera "The Bohemian Girl" in Vienna; the invitation coming from M. Pokorny, the director of a new theatre in that city, the Wieden, where the same work had been played the season previous with great success, with Herr Staudigl and Jetty Trefftz to strengthen the cast. The offer was accepted, as well it might be, the terms being at the liberal rate of 1000 francs per night for three performances. Curiosity to see the English composer of an opera which had achieved so marked a success in a country where the faculty of musical composition was denied to the deftless Briton, caused the speculation of the Viennese manager to thrive so unexpectedly well, that he forthwith proposed to the incongruous phenomenon a prolongation of his

engagement, on the same terms, to twelve nights and came off as triumphantly a winner by his new bargain as he had by his previously restricted venture. Thus was everybody pleased; the Viennese who had seen a real live English composer; the manager who had done the liberal thing and been rewarded; and Balfe who pocketed four hundred and eighty pounds of good German coin in less than a fortnight, besides an unlimited amount of honour and reputation. Nor did the benefits accruing from the lucky hit end here—there was "pippins and cheese to come," in the form of a supper given to Balfe by the magnificent Pokorny, and thereat a presentation of plate in the presence of all the principal artists, men of letters, and other celebrities of the Austrian capital. Moreover, during the repast lively and entrancing strains were wafted up from the streets below, produced by a band of sixty first-rate performers, conducted by the renowned Strauss, the parent and patriarch of all the Strausses, who to render the flattering incense the more keenly titillating commanded his instrumentalists to play selections from "The Siege of Rochelle," "Falstaff," "The Maid of Artois," &c. &c. Of course Balfe invited his brother of the bâton into the banqueting room, and they hob-a-nobbed in champagne to their mutual glory and success; when Strauss delivered himself of a

complimentary harangue, the purport of which Staudigl imparted to Balfe in that peculiar vein of English pronunciation, which as Polyphemus in "Acis and Galatea" he had rendered so peculiarly his own.

> "Pring me a dousant reets of tecend grout,
> To mague a bibe for my gabacious moud."

It was in the course of this harangue that the epithet "King of Melody" was first applied to Balfe, and by no high-priest of the craft could he be more legitimately anointed with the flattering supremacy than the famous Viennese conductor. The evening terminated with genuine Teutonic joviality, and Balfe subsequently appeared, like a true and gracious monarch, at the balcony to receive and acknowledge the lusty cheers of the musicians below, to whom he was presented by their chief.

The continental triumphs of Balfe were not destined to end here. After conquering Prussia and Austria, he was to have his Russian campaign, ending, however, in no disastrous retreat, but complete triumph and a prolonged occupation of the capital. One evening at the period of Balfe's second visit to Berlin, having been invited to Prince Charles of Prussia's country seat, and there sung several songs, the Crown Prince, who was one of the company, asked him whether he would like to go to St. Petersburg.

The reply was that seeing the immense distance of the journey, he should not feel inclined to make it unless armed with such powerful recommendations as would insure his expedition not proving fruitless. "As to that, Monsieur Balfe," was the Prince's gracious rejoinder, "you shall have a letter from me to my sister, the Empress." Balfe bowed profusely in acknowledgment to the kind offer, and was presently called on to repeat the process, when Prince Charles, who had been a listener to the conversation, added, "And I will do the same." It was there and then definitely arranged that the projected visit to St. Petersburg should be preceded by a letter addressed to the Empress by the Crown Prince of Prussia, and that when Balfe started he should take with him the credentials promised to him by Prince Charles.

In the following year, 1852, Balfe at the close of the London season started off to carry out this preconcerted advance to the far north in pursuit of profit, if possible, at any rate of wider fame. Before leaving England he took the sagacious precaution of advising his friend, Charles Eastland Michele, at that time holding the post of Consul-General at St. Petersburg, and previously for several years editor of the *Morning Post*, of his contemplated visit, and requesting information as

to the most suitable hotel to repair to with his family. To this feeler the reply was, a very agreeable intimation that Mr. Michele would be delighted to shelter Balfe and all his belongings beneath his own roof until he should have, on the spot, made choice of the mode and place of his more permanent settlement. This was an acceptably genial and comforting assurance for the traveller to carry with him as he set out to face the frigid blasts and snowy prospects of his long journey. But if it was a cordial against cold, it proved no talisman to ward off misfortune, for on his arrival at St. Petersburg in the month of October, ill news met him at the very alighting place. The death of the Duke of Leichtenberg, son-in-law of the late Emperor Nicholas, and husband of the Grand Duchess Marie, had thrown the Court into mourning for two months, and Balfe's hopes were consequently for that space of time frozen up. He must await their eventual fruition the best way he could, writing the gloomy interval away, gazing through his windows at the Neva as it was being fast arrested in its course and condemned to immobility like himself, or venturing forth enveloped in furs to take a glacial airing in his sledge across the hardened snow.

Courtly grief and its etiquette having run their

prescribed course, Balfe's blockade came to an end likewise. Having, on his arrival, delivered the credentials with which he had been furnished, according to due form and ceremonial, the composer at the end of the period of mourning was officially informed that the first Court Concert would be given at the residence of the Grand Duchess Helen, and that he was engaged to arrange and conduct it. This had a prosperous complexion, and seemed to promise that all was going to be made smooth for him on his path to high fortune. On the appointed evening he presented himself at the palace of the Grand Duchess radiant with satisfaction. The sight presented to him by these apartments—thronged with all the aristocracy and *beau monde* of the land, glistening with the jewellery of the ladies and the decorations of the gentlemen, chequered with the bright colours of uniforms and ball-dresses, and enveloped in an atmosphere of charming yet sobered elegance—was such as he had never before gazed on. But Balfe was true to his country, and enraptured, astonished, or excited, he was not to be absorbed out of his assurance and self-composure. His whole thoughts were how to hold his own among that brilliant throng, and win in his own special sphere the distinction that belonged to him. The concert commenced, and Balfe exerted himself to

the utmost, animating and directing everything; singing, playing, accompanying, introducing morceaux that were not in the programme; in short, as the French say, *il s'est mis en quatre:* he was as good as four ordinary conductors. Yet all was labour in vain; do what he would there was no pleasing that august audience. Their apathy was imperturbable: whether he gave them Mozart, Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, or himself; whether he stuck to the programme or gracefully varied it, not a sign of recognition could he extort. It seemed a vast and organized conspiracy to consider him non-existent.

"This must be the effect of the arctic climate on high society; fashion frozen down below zero; and I am the zero," thought Balfe, as he wished himself back to England; where, if the fools or knaves of musical criticism tried to ignore him, the hearty sympathy of the ingenuous multitude was with him. He was yielding to these regretful reflections and feeling not a little repentant that he had ever been seduced by brilliant assurances of Imperial patronage and protection, when he noticed advancing towards the piano at which he was seated a young officer dressed in a naval uniform, and whose prepossessing appearance and winning manners, instinct with that unaffected, frank and straightforward manliness peculiar

to the sailor, so impressed Balfe that he found himself in a few minutes chatting glibly and unreservedly with the Imperial guest, who spoke English fluently. They talked mostly of music; the young officer had heard several of Balfe's operas, and admired them; he was passionately fond of music, and himself an amateur performer on the violoncello and pianoforte. Presently they spoke of his own profession, the navy; he belonged to that of Russia, and talked of having a piano in his cabin, which made Balfe jump at the conclusion that his new acquaintance must be a post-captain at least. Never had he met with a Russian to whom his nature warmed more thoroughly, and the thought struck him to pour his complaint of the treatment he had received into the sympathetic ears of the young Russian captain, as he believed him to be.

"I hardly expected," said Balfe, "that with letters of recommendation to the Empress from her Majesty's two brothers, the King and Prince of Prussia, presented two months since, I should have been entirely forgotten, and my presence here so thoroughly overlooked."

"You are not forgotten, let me assure you," replied the captain, "not in the least, and I will immediately find out why it is you have not been sent for."

Away went the young officer with this assurance to the other side of the room, and, to Balfe's astonish-

ment, as he kept his eyes fixed on him, he beheld the young sailor unceremoniously approach the Empress, and, with the utmost nonchalance, fall into conversation with her.

"Can you tell me who that is?" asked Balfe, with the keenest curiosity, of the illustrious Lablache, who happened to be at his side.

"That, my friend, is the Grand Duke Constantine himself, and no other," replied the basso, not a little marvelling at Balfe's ignorance of the person he had so long been conversing with. Taken quite aback by the revelation, the neglected composer was beginning to fear that he had been a little too free-spoken in his expressions of dissatisfaction at the treatment he had received, when he saw the Empress, after holding a short colloquy with the Grand Duke, rise from her seat and walk straight to the pianoforte. Addressing Balfe, who was beginning for once to feel a little awkward, with a smile that immediately set him completely at ease, the Empress said, "Non, M. Balfe, vous n'êtes certainement pas oublié; mais pardonnez moi une question, je vous prie, n'êtes-vous pas le M. Balfe *de l'air?*" To this puzzling inquiry it was difficult to make a reply until it was explained to Balfe amidst much good-natured laughter, that the Empress alluded to an air by which the

composer's name had already been made famous at the Court, it having been sung both by Alboni and Pauline Viardot. The air in question was the rondo finale of "The Maid of Artois," which being then probably the only music of his known in St. Petersburg, always was called "Balfe's air," much as we say "Rode's air," and in the letter written in recommendation of the composer by the Queen of Prussia to her sister-in-law, the Empress, he had been mentioned and identified as "M. Balfe de l'air."

How thoroughly compensation was made for the disappointment of his first *entrée* into the exalted society whose smiles he had tried so vainly to win, will be shown by the following letter, addressed to a friend in London in April of the following year, just before his departure from the city of the Czar:—

"My dear Bingley,—

"I cannot tell you the pleasure your letter gave me; thank you a thousand times for giving me news of yourself and dear family. I have been so busy that I have scarcely had time to write, but now the season is over here, and next week I start for Moscow, where I shall only remain a week or so, and then I shall go to Dantzic to play a fortnight with my daughter, after which I am off to

Vienna, for which place I have an engagement to produce an opera. The opera I intend giving is 'Keolanthe,' for they will do it justice as regards scenery, &c. &c.

"I have done splendidly here. The Russians have positively taken a fancy to me, and I have had all the prettiest women in St. Petersburg as pupils. I shall come back here next season of course. The Empress herself had the goodness to request me to return. I really cannot speak in too high terms of *all* the Imperial family; I am spoiled by them, and, what is almost better, have received splendid presents. I have seven diamond rings of value. I was delighted to hear that you sometimes thought of your friend M. W. B.; I assure you that not a day passes but I say to myself, I wonder how old Greenford is, and do the inmates ever think of one whom they treated *at all times so kindly?* Your letter proved to me that you had not forgotten me. Kiss your darlings for me, and remember me most affectionately to Mrs. Bingley, and tell her not to ride herself to death on her new horse. I shall soon write again, and tell you where to address me.

"Believe me,

"Your sincere friend,

"M. W. Balfe."

I have printed the whole of this letter, though only a part of it concerns my subject, in order to place before the reader an example of Balfe's unaffected epistolary style, in which the man appears with all his genuine attributes undressed up for show or seeking to produce a premeditated impression. His nature was essentially simple, ingenuous, and warm-hearted, and what faults or vices he had, were on the surface. Had I printed a thousand letters of Balfe, they would have shown these characteristics, and only these, and just as obviously as they are visible in this one specimen, to which will be restricted any exhibition of Balfe's correspondence.

Balfe during this sojourn in St. Petersburg gave two concerts, at which Mesdames Caradori, Viardot, Garcia, Marai, and Demeric, and Signori Mario, Tamberlik, Lablache, Debassini, Romani, &c. &c., sang. With this magnificent staff of executants, it will not be surprising to learn that his united receipts for both concerts were 1600*l.* The programme on both occasions was entirely made up of selections from Balfe's operas, and the Empress, with the Imperial family, were among the audience, Imperial permission having been most graciously granted that these performances should take place in the Salle de Noblesse. Balfe's departure from St. Petersburg

took place in May, 1853, and, as his letter shows, he left with the full intention of returning the following year. The war which broke out, however, in the meanwhile, put an end to the execution of the project, and he did not return to St. Petersburg till several years later.

His other and previous engagement, however, was duly fulfilled—namely, that for the production of "Keolanthe" at the Imperial Theatre at Vienna, in which city his fame was already well established, his "Bohemian Girl" having been performed there as many as three hundred times. This opera, together with the "Quatre Fils Aymon," were both originally introduced to the Viennese by the celebrated Staudigl; in the first, that great artist's fine baritone voice and admirable dramatic singing shone to the highest advantage when delivering "The heart bowed down," with which he invariably produced the most marked sensation; in the second, "Die Haimon's Kinder" as it is called in German, his great hit was with the air "*Sentinelle, prenez garde à vous.*" "Keolanthe" now in its turn proved a complete success, and maintained, it would be more correct to say advanced, the composer's reputation with German audiences, to whom the fantastic and dreamy character of that charming work was especially acceptable, while its well preserved harmony

of colouring, in keeping with the subject, satisfied their critical taste.

Immediately after this, having while in Vienna accepted proposals to that effect, Balfe proceeded to Trieste, where in the month of December he superintended the production of "The Bohemian Girl," then given for the first time in Italian, and with the same success that has invariably attended it wherever, or in whatever garb it presents itself, with its irresistible charm and unfading freshness of melody. Once her foot was set on Italian ground, the "Zingara," as she was once more christened, was destined to travel far apace after the manner of her race, and Bologna, Brescia, and Bergamo were the first to welcome her in succession.

Not a little wearied with his prolonged and restless wanderings, Balfe now sought an interval of calm repose and needful quietness after so much harassing toil and enervating excitement; and where could he find what he needed in a more soothing and serene guise than a sojourn by the shores of Como? Here amidst the enchanting scenery of that lovely lake he spent several months in the company of his family; and his mind had no sooner recovered its wonted elasticity than he fell to work again on another opera, an order for which had been given him by the

Director of the Trieste Opera House, where in the ensuing autumn, 1854, under the title of "Pittore e Duca," it was produced, but not with that amount of success which Balfe had reckoned on, or those who had previous knowledge of the work and could judge its merits had anticipated. It had been regarded by these as his highest achievement up to that time; but from a change in the cast originally intended, the opera was inadequately executed, and after a few representations Balfe withdrew the work and declared it should never again see the light until it could be executed in a thoroughly fitting manner. He now, after an absence of four years, made up his mind to return to England, and arrived in London in January, 1856, from which period may be dated the last phasis of his career, which in fourteen years was to reach its sudden and too early close. To a rapid summary of his latest labours, still fresh in the memory of the present generation, and the few events and vicissitudes deserving record which chequered this remaining portion of his life, the next and last chapter of this memoir will be devoted.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN Balfe arrived in London in January, 1856, there was not much, as he surveyed the field of his former enterprises, to cheer him, or awaken hope as to the future. For the sources of inward satisfaction or support, he must look backward, and abroad, rather than at home. He could not penetrate the veil which was to lift so shortly, and show him in prospect yet another spell of triumph for his genius now verging on its ripest golden-fruited autumn. It was a barren and dispiriting look-out indeed that presented itself for his contemplation on his return from those four years of foreign travel and experience and of happy enlargement of the bounds of his fame, and the sphere of his personal estimation.

Drury Lane was under the control of Mr. E. T. Smith, who had made of it that legitimate home of pantomime which it has remained to this day. True, he was shortly succeeded by the late Mr. J. H. Tully,

a worthy theatrical chef d'orchestre, and composer of many small tuneful matters, who occupied the theatre in March with a new Operatic Company, and produced a succession of adapted Italian operas, commencing with Verdi's "Trovatore" (then Englished for the first time), which were as fairly executed as the very limited means at his command would allow. But here was no chance for Balfe, who would require more sufficient resources both artistically and financially than seemed within the narrow and unstable grasp of the new impressario, and whether or not a proposal came from that quarter, Balfe did not avail himself of "Tully's offices."

Covent Garden had in the interim of its Italian occupation been let, as destiny grimly ruled it, to Anderson, the Wizard of the North, whose reign of conglomerate music, mummery, comedy, and conjuring was not to end till the theatre had been reduced to ashes in a conflagration which seemed the legitimate and necessary finale imposed by the eternal proprieties on a certain "monster benefit" extending over two direful days, and terminating in an orgy of spangled squalor which, although under the title of a bal masqué, cynically unmasked all the repulsive possibilities of human degradation. Little thought Balfe when shocked by the news of this sudden and terrible catastrophe that

Fate with fiery hand was thus preparing the ground for a new and grander edifice which should be the arena of his latest and most matured labours. As yet he could only bewail with all the rest of London the lamentable destruction of property, and storm vainly, still with all London to take up the chorus, at the gross carelessness which directly led to it, and the criminal indifference to the desecration of a great national monument to which indirectly it was referable.

As for Her Majesty's Theatre, which was to open again this year under Mr. Lumley's direction, and after an interval of three years, if Balfe had entertained any hope of resuming the bâton of musical director under his former chief, he was doomed to disappointment. That part was filled by a Signor Bonetti, whereat the writer of contemporary notice exclaims, "Why not Balfe?" Echo answers, "Why?" ashamed of the other monosyllable. This surpasses the celebrated Irish echo, but the stroke of rhetorical satire was well aimed, if awkwardly delivered.

Notwithstanding all these unpropitious circumstances, however, the year was not going to be altogether a blank one for Balfe's reputation, or for his material interests. He had brought with him from his foreign wanderings a little treasure in its kind, the fruit of occasional hours of peaceful leisure

rescued from the hurry and whirl of his life abroad, and a speaking, or rather singing, token of his sustained and versatile powers. This was his "Six New Songs and a Duet," from the poem of Longfellow, the majority of which he had written while on a visit to his son-in-law, Mr. Max Behrend,* at Dantzic, immediately after leaving St. Petersburg. These beautiful and expressive melodies, models of that wondrous interpretation which an intellectual musician can give to poetry—at once deep and delicate, clear and defined as speech to the mind, yet imbued with the vague mysticism that addresses the soul—were received from the first with all the admiration which they command; and the praise awarded to them by the critical press was neither stinted nor defaced by petty or captious deductions. A judge not wontedly eulogistic towards the composer wrote of them: "We have not only to compliment Mr. Balfe upon the more than

* Balfe had two sons and two daughters. The younger son died in infancy, the elder was brought up for the military profession, and obtained through the interest of the late Marquis of Rochester a commission in the East India Company's Service. He has now retired from military life, and is residing in New York. Balfe's eldest daughter, Louise, married Mr. Max Behrend, a merchant of Dantzic; his second daughter, Victoire, after a short artistic career, was married first to Sir John Crampton, English Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and subsequently to the Duke de Frias, a Spanish nobleman of ancient family, whose father was the Spanish Envoy Extraordinary at the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. Both daughters died prematurely.

usually felicitous display of a tuneful vein which is inherent in his nature: he has exhibited other and higher qualities in his musical settings of these beautiful verses. Each song is endowed with an expression of its own, and the musician has endeavoured to conciliate the poet as heartily as Herr Wagner himself could possibly desire. Indeed, the American and Briton go hand-in-hand with such genuine sympathy and goodwill as we would fain see characterize for ever the relationship of the two mightiest nations of the earth." Of the serenade "Good night," the same writer says: "A most acceptable merit in this spirited song is that although the words embody what is called a *serenade*, the music is entirely devoid of that morbid expression which is rather rant than sentiment. The melody is vigorous and healthy, and the harmony to fit; where the poet leans to sadness, as in the words "While I count the weary hours," the composer has succeeded in conveying it by a delicate touch, a brief transition, as it were, in the accompaniment; but he everywhere presents that genial freshness which is the chief attraction of the serenade. A manly lover addresses his mistress in manly language, and the musician has suggested this as forcibly as the poet himself." In the like strain of freely-meted and unmingled praise

are the remaining numbers, characterized each in their turn with the same careful discrimination of excellences. According to Mr. St. Leger these songs were offered to Mr. Robert Cocks, of New Burlington Street, for the modest sum of 60*l.*, and met with a refusal. They were eventually disposed of to Mr. John Boosey, who had the good sense to buy them at the price of a hundred guineas. The investment while it proved his appreciative taste, must have well remunerated the purchaser's commercial sagacity.

If Drury Lane Theatre was not available to Balfe as a field for the production of any new work, he was enabled to turn it to profitable account by taking a benefit there by way of a reminder to the great public of London that he was, as the Americans say, "round" and ready once more to serve them, lyre in hand, if a fitting opportunity should present itself. On this occasion Fortune put on one of her best smiles to keep up the composer's heart in his frozen-out condition—July notwithstanding—and he was enabled to collect about him a gallant troop wherewith to take the public's attention and pockets by storm. Messrs. Sims Reeves, Weiss, and Gassier, Madame Viardot Garcia, Miss Dolby, and Miss Arabella Goddard were among them, and the result was such an overflowing "bumper" as is rarely witnessed, and was the more

gratifying in every sense, as the prices of admission were nearly doubled; but the programme was a brilliant one, and though "The Bohemian Girl" was given, Balfe was modest enough to vary it with other attractive material besides his own. Doubtless such help to pluck and purse was needed, and the harvest thus reaped of pelf and re-awakened renown was both timely and welcome.

Meanwhile rumours began to float about the world of music that a scheme was hatching which would soon produce its chicken, and a notable chicken it proved to be; for though it never attained altogether to the full growth and plumage promised for it, yet was it the finest fowl of its kind and the longest liver to boot. This was the scheme for a new National Opera, which, taken under the sheltering wings of that pair of melodious singing birds, Louisa Pyne and William Harrison, "eventuated" finally in the Pyne and Harrison management of the Royal English Opera, Covent Garden. From the first it sprang up side by side with Mr. Gye's administration of the Royal Italian Opera, beginning its existence when, burned out of their original abode, the manager encamped with his troop temporarily at the Lyceum while his new and present stately edifice was a-building. In the autumn succeeding Mr. Gye's second campaign in this house

of passage the Pyne and Harrison enterprise commenced its operations. Availing itself with advantage of the prestige of the other well established and completely organized enterprise, and occupying the yet warm nest of the fashion-followed Italian songsters, it took over much of its resources in the orchestra and the general framework of stage affairs, together with the late Mr. A. Mellon to preside over the one, and the late Mr. A. Harris to reign over the other. Nothing so promising as this apparently well contrived undertaking had ever been inaugurated for the future prospects of English Opera, and nothing so efficient or durable had resulted, brief as was its existence and incapable as it ultimately proved of exhibiting a really stable and vigorous constitution.

Balfe was very soon to the fore in such a happy outfall as this for the exercise of his matured mental energies, impatient to develop their strength and extent. He had been at work on a new opera, the libretto of which was furnished him by Mr. A. Harris with the assistance of Mr. E. Falconer for the lyrical portion of the work. What a relief for him to be quit of the vague grammarless eccentricities of Bunn's innumerous jumble of rhyme, to whose lagging crawl and halting hop Falconer's Hibernian versification was an eagle's flight! The English

Opera commenced in September, and on the 29th of October, 1857, Balfe produced "The Rose of Castile," the framework of which was borrowed from Adolphe Adam's "Muletier de Tolède. The cast included Miss Pyne, Harrison, Weiss, and Honey, and all London was in anticipation of such a musical treat as had not of late regaled its ears, nor was it destined to disappointment. Balfe's diary for that date bears this entry :—

"My new opera, 'The Rose of Castile,' comes out to-night. If one could possibly judge by the rehearsals we have every chance of a great success. *Nous verrons!* . . . . Great success. I was called out after each act, and received in a most enthusiastic manner."

On the following day, "Second night of 'Rose of Castile;' great success; house full. . . ."

A success it indeed proved and one of the good old sort, progressing merrily to its hundredth night, when such a scene took place as newspaper writers are wont to describe with infelicitous classicism as "a complete ovation." Wreaths, flags, bouquets, baskets of flowers, all the prescribed paraphernalia of enthusiasm rained upon the stage. In this opera occurs "The Convent Cell," one of the composer's most popular inspirations.

From this time until 1863 there flowed from

Balfe's pen, in that succession of years, a series of operas, autumn after autumn, with almost unbroken regularity, and by these in the main—it would be little short of the truth to say exclusively—was the Pyne and Harrison enterprise sustained. Notwithstanding the outcry for a field where native talent of the highest order might display and assert the range and reach of powers, latent and lost to the world for the want of it, in Balfe alone was found the ability to keep up the ball and by a succession of efforts to charm, interest, or enchain the public with continued, if varyingly intense attractiveness. Macfarren, Glover, Wallace—Balfe's countryman whom the critics loved to pit against him and endow with heaven knows what depths of science to his confusion—passed over the arena like fugitive shadows to return to their profound abysms of fugue and counterpoint, leaving their shallow-brained compeer sole, substantial, flesh-and-blood occupant of the point of sight.

To "The Rose of Castile" succeeded "Satanella," in 1858, the following year, and in the month of February of the same year "La Zingara," the Italian version of "The Bohemian Girl," was produced at Her Majesty's Theatre "with applause from the many loud enough to 'rend the heavens,'" says Mr. H. F. Chorley, in his "Thirty Years' Musical

Recollections,"—that tissue of sham criticism, ill-acted ecstasies and æsthetical frippery, wherein nothing is genuine or sincere save the ignorant assumption, vanity, caprice and spite of the writer—and he ends one of his egregiously unfair tirades of disparagement with this characteristic piece of pure farrago, winding up with a most unhappy forecast. "There is a fury of rapture with which even a column of decimals would be received if a Rachel or a Ristori were to recite it on the stage. Though this is not precisely the case in the present instance, the poor 'La Zingara' was received in the year 1858 with a triumph which had never been exceeded, even in the days of the Catalani. As regards Italian repertory, where is it already?" If one may imagine the shades of composer and critic to meet in the Elysian Fields, how one must skulk from the path of the other!

In 1859 Balfe once more undertook the journey to St. Petersburg, this time less for himself than for his younger daughter who was starting on a career of art for which she was in every way fitted by natural gifts, improved and heightened by cultivation under her father's assiduous guidance. Fortunately for herself—for the path of fame is rough and thorny for woman's tender feet—the unforeseen course of events disposed otherwise of her future than either herself or

her parents calculated. She had been but a few months in St. Petersburg, when the personal charms and accomplishments of Balfe's daughter had brought about the important conjuncture which is announced in the following passage from a letter dated March 26th, 1860, from the father to his old friend, Mr. Bingley, of Regent Street. "I am going to give you a little news that will surprise you, and I am sure that you will be pleased to hear that my darling child Victoire leaves the stage for ever and retires into private life; she is to be married to our ambassador at the Court, Sir John F. Crampton, at the end of this week, and her mother and your old friend the father return home childless! Well, now both my girls are well provided for, and I am a happy old gentleman. You will also be glad to hear that the Court here have expressed their satisfaction, and my girl has an audience of the Grand Duchess Constantine to-morrow to receive her felicitations."

On Balfe's return to London, he found his vogue not a whit diminished, but rather on the increase, while his immediate position before the world as England's leading dramatic composer was attracting from the press a most respectful recognition of his abilities, and one more in accordance with the patent facts. "Satanella" had had a long run at the Lyceum,

despite the somewhat clumsy book furnished him by Messrs. A. Harris and Falconer; but Mr. Harris' collaborator being a fair poet had furnished the composer with words inspiring some of his best melodies, among them the immortal "Power of Love." To this still popular opera now succeeded "Bianca, or the Bravo's Bride," the libretto of which was written by Mr. Palgrave Simpson, who had sought his subject in the old romantic story dramatized by "Monk" Lewis under the title of "Rugantino, or the Bravo of Venice." This work was praised by the musical judges for its musician-like qualities, and the composer was actually credited for inventive fancy, imagination, and science in the handling of the orchestra, while his finales were said to exhibit the highest skill in welding a mass of dramatic material to one complete whole. The success of this opera was nevertheless one of esteem only, not of enthusiasm. The cooler the public, the warmer the critics.

After a brief sojourn beneath the classic roof of Drury Lane Theatre, the Pyne and Harrison management transferred its penates definitively and for the remainder of its term of life to the new-built Royal Italian Opera House, Covent Garden; and an agreement was forthwith entered into, under sign and seal, between the managers and Balfe for the supply of three

English operas composed expressly for them at an interval of a year each and at the respective dates of October, 1861, 1862, and 1863. The composer was to receive three hundred pounds for the exclusive right of acting, singing, and representing at any place or places wheresoever for three years, and another hundred pounds for the optional right if claimed for a further term of two years immediately after the first. One hundred and fifty was payable on the 20th of October of each year specified, and the remainder on the day after the first night of performance. There was a further stipulation that the managers were to supply the opera-book and to charge one hundred pounds for the right of printing the words with the music, and in no other shape. This agreement is sketched out here because it is a very good model for such contracts and because it shows moreover the reliance placed upon Balfe's aid and assistance as a permanent pillar of the new undertaking. The acting right, be it observed, is only a supplementary source of profit to the composer, whose main remuneration is in the price he receives for the right of publishing his work; for this Balfe now regularly demanded and received one thousand pounds.

The first opera produced under this agreement—"The Puritan's Daughter"—was one which was at

the time, and is now still regarded as the composer's highest achievement and in itself a masterpiece of the style and class of work to which it belongs; as though Balfe had resolved to afford at starting the most striking justification of the confidence reposed in him. The book had been supplied by Mr. J. V. Bridgman, a sufficient guarantee that it would sin in no respect of good taste or thoroughness and elegance of workmanship; and by a combination of tact and experience in the handling, and good fortune in the choice of subject, Balfe for once had an excellent drama to work on and words to set to music that were at once smooth and easy, spirited and terse. Miss Pyne, Harrison, Santley, Honey, and H. Corrie sustained the edifice of the opera, and each had parts admirably suited to their separate characteristics and abilities; and Alfred Mellon, that most conscientious, enthusiastic, skilful, and specially gifted of conductors, had devoted all his zeal and energies to the perfection of its execution. This time there could be and was no hesitation in the terms of appreciation employed towards the merits of the work and the ripe and genial mastery exhibited by the composer. Scarcely any of the old reluctant, balancing and sneering reserve, the "buts," "ifs," and "howevers" of malice struggling with conscience, appeared in the critical notices, and for once

Balfe was heartily acknowledged to have worthily won his immense success. He had shown "the highest art and skill" in the conduct and execution of his work; his orchestration was "spirited," "ingenious," and "interesting;" his finales and concerted pieces were "well constructed." Here is a fair sample of this change of key among the musico-judicial fry, and notwithstanding the attempted subtlety that would veil a sneer beneath words of apparently candid congratulation, both the game and the grounds of disparagement are obviously given up, while the concession to the just cause of popular and pleasing music, and the value of success, is as complete as common sense can desire it.

"Lucky Mr. Balfe"—so commences a contemporary notice of "The Puritan's Daughter"—"who thus interests the musical world beforehand and enchains it afterwards and holds, it may be, the existences of hundreds suspended from the nib of his pen. The triumphant career of our English-Irish composer has however been honourably achieved and sustained. The favour bestowed on the composer of 'The Siege of Rochelle,' some quarter of a century since, has never veered about, but has rather been confirmed and augmented with each succeeding year. New candidates for operatic honours have put in their claims from time to time with greater or less results, but after due

season the old liking has returned and the old feeling has resumed its sway. Profounder musicians may have entered the arena of competition, more conscientious labourers in the vineyard may have presented more carefully gathered fruits, but one touch of nature makes the whole world kin, and as Mr. Balfe in his compositions aims to please the million in the first place, and endeavours to charm without effort, he has always the majority with him, who after all are the judges and alone can confer immortality."

Having reached so lofty a summit as this, it must be expected that to proceed almost absolutely implies descent. First, the attainment of inferior heights, then the decline to an actual valley. The opera which now followed did not belie this so natural expectation, and "The Armourer of Nantes," produced in 1863, betrayed, it must be confessed, resources too rapidly and frequently taxed for the interest of the composer's high repute. Not that the general character of the music was other than might be expected from the hearing of Balfe's preceding works, but with all the care bestowed on the choruses and concerted pieces, and the display of powers that could only belong to the ripe musician, there was not the same bright freshness and marked originality in their melodic inspiration taken as a whole. Balfe wanted

rest, and who will wonder at it when he surveys the following catalogue of his productions up to this date, copied from a list in his own hand, of which a facsimile is appended to this volume:—

1.	I Rivali di se Stessi	Palermo, 1829.
2.	Un Avertimento di Gelosi	Pavia, 1830.
3.	Enrico Quarto al passo della Marno	Milan, 1831.
4.	Siege of Rochelle	London, 1836.
5.	Maid of Artois	„ 1836.
6.	Catherine Grey	„ 1837.
7.	Joan of Arc	„ 1837.
8.	Diadeste	„ 1838.
9.	Falstaff	„ 1838.
10.	Keolanthe	„ 1841.
11.	Le Puits d'Amour	Paris, 1843.
12.	Bohemian Girl	London, 1843.
13.	Daughter of St. Mark	„ 1844.
14.	Les Quatre Fils Aymon	Paris, 1844.
15.	The Enchantress	London, 1845.
16.	L'Etoile de Séville	Grand Opera, Paris, 1845.
17.	The Bondman	London, 1846.
18.	The Devil's In It (Letty)	„ 1847.
19.	The Maid of Honour	„ 1847.
20.	The Sicilian Bride	„ 1852.
21.	Pittore e Duca	„ 1856.
22.	The Rose of Castile	„ 1857.
23.	Satanella	„ 1858.
24.	Bianca	„ 1860.
25.	Blanche de Nevers	„ 1860.
26.	The Puritan's Daughter	„ 1861.
27.	The Armourer of Nantes	„ 1863.

Three Cantatas—1 in Paris, 1 in Bologna (for Grisi), and Mazeppa in London.

To this remarkable enumeration, exhibiting proof of an amount of labour, a fertility of resource, and a

1 I Rivali di se stessi Palermo 1829
2 un avventuriero ai gelosi Padua 1830
3 Enrico IV al passo della Marna Milano 1831
4 Siege of Rochelle 1 —— 1835
5 maid of artois 2 —— 1836
6 Catherine grey 3 —— 1837
7 Joan of arc 4 —— 1837
8 Diadeste —— 1838
9 Falstaff 5 —— 1838
10. Ideolanthe —— 1841
11 Le Puits D'amour —— 1843
12 Bohemian girl 7 —— 1843
13 The Daughter of St mare —— 1844
14 Les Quatre fils aymon —— 1844
15 The Enchantress 10 —— 1845
16 L'Etoile de Seville —— 1845
17 The Bandsman 12 —— 1846
18 The Devils in it —— 1847
19 The maid of Honor —— 1847
20 The Sicilian Bride —— 1852
21 Pittore e Duca Trieste —— 1856
22 The Rose of Castille —— 1857
23 Satanella 15 —— 1858
24 Bianca —— 1860
25 The Puritans Daughter —— 1861
26 Blanche de Nevers —— 1862
27 The armourer of Nants —— 1863

Extract from his Diary. — June 9th 1870.

I am better in health and think
the air of Romney just right for me.
I am never well in Paris — I am
sorry to say this —
I am studying & making alterations
in the "Knight of the Leopard," I am very
fond of this work, I wonder if it will take
the Public — chi lo sa ? —

degree of industry seldom paralleled, must be added his cantata of "The Sleeping Queen," performed at the Gallery of Illustration; innumerable minor works, songs, ballads, romances, duets, many of which have attained great and deserved popularity; his edition of Moore's Melodies published in 1859 with new symphonies of his own composition, a work he was so eminently qualified to accomplish, witness his beautiful love-song, "They tell me thou'rt the favoured guest," breathing the very spirit of the Irish melodies; together with the lost "Atala" and a mass of work left unfinished in his portfolio, some of which may yet, doubtless, see the light.

In 1864 Balfe disposed of the lease of his London residence in Seymour Street, Portman Square, and resolved to retire like a musical Cincinnatus from the field of strife to the harvest field—exchanging pen and bâton for plough and dibble. He became the proprietor of a small landed property in Hertfordshire, called Rowney Abbey, and turned gentleman farmer. This was an eccentric resolution, doubtless, and in its decisive yet unforeseeable nature thoroughly characteristic of the man. Yet who will not sympathize with the dream of rural retirement that inspired it—who will not see with Balfe's eyes that vision of pastoral repose after the scenes of turmoil and excitement that

were to be left blissfully behind after the ceaseless toil, the iterated inevitable call on the wearied brain henceforth to end for ever or be exchanged for a leisurely wooing of the Muse in shaded arbours or by lisping springs? Rowney Abbey was no commonplace farmhouse, nor its domains an ordinary assemblage of acres. It had a history that stretched into the romantic days of the first Norman kings. "Rowena Abbey," its true appellation, "was originally a priory of nuns, of which there were formerly many in Hertfordshire," says an archæological authority, "and was founded by Conan, Duke of Brittany, Earl of Richmond, and Lord of the Manor of Great Mundon, in the tenth year of the reign of Henry II., and in the year of grace 1164, or nearly seven hundred years ago." The nuns were of the Benedictine order, and their priory was dedicated to St. John the Baptist; but somehow, by negligence and carelessness, the poor things became involved, and through their mismanagement forfeited the property, the history of which becomes thenceforth strictly secular, not to say profane, until it reached the hands of Balfe, who was in no way alarmed at the unpleasant consequences which had befallen the nuns' mismanagement of the demesne. Was not Mrs. Balfe there to assume the economical department, to organize and direct

with thrift and wisdom and profit, so that he refrained from any undue expenditure? As to this here is an entry in Balfe's diary: "What a wonderful woman my darling wife is—what a place she has made of Rowney! I could scarcely believe my eyes, everything is so lovely and so very comfortable."

So Balfe was going to be very happy in the retreat he had provided for his declining years and the calm enjoyment of long struggled-for property. It is an old history—does not the reader see the well-known end at hand? The happiness, the calm, the peace sighed for was but a prophetic yearning of the soul for that peace which is not of this world; a stretching forth of the frail hands on earth towards that which it was indeed soon to grasp, but not here. But Balfe knew it not; he was cheerful, looked forward with hope to further triumphs in his old career, achieved in his own time, without hurry or pressure, ripe fruits that should drop in due season on the soft turf of ease, rich in flavour and worth their weight in the market-man's gold. In 1865 he set forth to pay a visit to his daughter and new son-in-law, the Duke de Frias, meeting them at Biarritz and passing through Paris on his way. He took with him the libretto of a new opera, entitled "The Knight of the Leopard;" this was to be his last work, nor was it to be produced

till he was no more, and then in an Italian dress and sung by foreign artists.

Amidst his letters home to his wife, teeming with those touches of a naturally fond and affectionate disposition, sensible of its many shortcomings and weaknesses, and which from the very undress of their expression betoken their own genuineness, he makes repeated allusion to the progress he is making in this work and the pleasure he takes in it—the subject having evidently seized upon his imagination with a strong grip.

From Eaux Bonnes, whither he had removed for a change, he writes, "The air of this place does me a great deal of good. I have entirely finished composing the first act of the 'King Lion Heart'" (another title to the same work) "libretto, which I brought away with me, and Vic and Pepe" (his daughter and her husband) "think I never created anything more charming than a melody to be sung by the tenor, which terminates Act the First. I have completely finished the P.F. accompaniment of the said act—what think you of that?"

From time to time further progress is recorded still with the same expressions of satisfaction and belief that he is doing good work. In November his daughter writes to her mother, "I wish his lovely opera could be given this year, it is beautiful! I really think his

very best—such *melodies*, such a song for the tenor, quite *schwärmerisch!* (impassioned), such a duet for the prima donna and tenor, and such an old-fashioned popular melody for Blondel, such a march, such a grand prayer, and such a lovely bit of organ! Ah! it is really delicious!" It will be seen that the Duchess of Frias, making all allowance for filial partiality, was a perspicacious judge, and hit upon the real points of the opera with prophetic foresight.

In 1866 Balfe returned to Rowney Abbey and his farm; and we may imagine him duly engrossed in agricultural details, mastering its profundities, let us hope, better than, according to his friends the contrapuntal pundits, he had fathomed the mysteries of his own art. The Muse had her share of his attention, however, and Ceres and Calliope went hand-in-hand. From time to time he opens a negotiation with the publishing interest for the copyright of his next work, but nothing is concluded, for he is now determined to secure a good bargain and able to wait his time. "Thank God," he writes about this time, "I am no more in a situation to sell my work under its value." Alas! how fleeting was to be his hold of this happy position for one of his craft. In art and in all work of the brain does it not seem that when the struggle for life is over the life must end?

In the early part of 1868 Balfe again went abroad. His health had been giving those about him uneasiness. A bronchial affection which had troubled him much latterly and once or twice threatened him somewhat alarmingly, clung to him with obstinacy. On the 19th of March his diary records, "Kissed my darling wife on pier at Dover. I left the boat at 9.30. Lina (Mrs. Balfe) returned to London and Rowney. I arrived at Paris at 6 in the evening, my sweet Vic (his daughter) was waiting for me at the Station. On Friday, thank God, I slept well, and feel much better this morning. Called upon Gerard and St. Georges. We had the Emperor's Box at the Grand Opera. Hamlet with Faure and Mdlle. Nilsson. Both good music excepting 4th act very slow and uninteresting. My health improving."

The present visit of Balfe to Paris was in pursuance of an agreement, proposed to and accepted by him, on the part of M. Pasdeloup, the director of the Théâtre Lyrique, to produce "La Bohémienne," the French version of his opera from the pen of M. St. Georges. Accordingly we have the following entries in his diary:—"Sunday, March 22. First meeting at Theatre with artistes, great success, all the music pleased everybody! Monday. To-day I am free, so I can work to set the old Bohémienne to rights.

Tuesday. Rehearsal at half-past one for Bohémienne at Theatre. All present excepting *Trousse Diable* (Devilshoof). Wednesday. Rehearsal No. 2 in reality."

In the following June there is this entry:—"Had a chat with De Leuwen about a new opera." No boding shadow cast itself across the pages as he made it! "For man also knoweth not his time."

Another day of satisfaction and triumph, another earthly crown awarded to the faithful workman, was yet in store. "December, Thursday, 30. 'La Bohémienne' produced in Paris, at Théâtre Lyrique, first time, a great and genuine success" is the entry—the last in the book—boldly written across its cover. In February the following year, 1870, there is, in another book, under the date March 22:—"Received official notice of the Emperor having conferred upon me the decoration of the Légion d'Honneur—Monsieur le Chevalier!!!" The three points in their ironical exultation seem to indicate that Balfe laughed in his sleeve at this decoration of his button-hole. He felt he belonged to those choice spirits whose name is not "Legion."

In May Balfe left Paris for England. A severe attack of bronchitis had weakened him, and he felt the need of a change of air. There was nothing, however, in his appearance to denote that his health was

materially shaken. Such depression as he exhibited was attributed to the shock of a recent great bereavement—the death of his eldest and favourite daughter. But Balfe always struggled to make a show of good spirits, and he probably concealed both the degree to which he felt his health affected and the depth of the wound to his father's heart. He longed to return to Rowney Abbey, the air of which he believed did him good, and in fact for a short time his health improved. Early in September, however, he caught a cold, a relapse of his old complaint supervened, and his strength flagged alarmingly. He rallied, however, and hopes were entertained that with a change to a warm climate he might recover, but a sudden change presented itself, and Dr. Williams was sent for from London, who arrived in the evening of the 19th of October. All hope, however, was over, and he expired the next day shortly after noon.

How he was regretted, how honoured through the length and breadth of the land in the public notices of his death, is of too recent date to need recalling. Balfe's remains were laid in the earth at Kensal Green, where a simple but imposing granite monument erected by his widow marks his grave.

BALFE'S LAST OPERA.

A SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

WHEN Balfe was working with so much enthusiasm, and as it seemed with a fresh lease of youthful inspiration, at his "Knight of the Leopard," he as little thought that this would be his swan-song as that, when heard for the first time, it would no longer be associated with the original language which had suggested its varied and flowing strains, but be linked with words in that tongue which had first called forth his talents as an operatic writer, and be sung by Italian artists and on a quasi-Italian stage. He had believed in the possibility during his life-time of a re-establishment of the Royal English Opera, and had indulged in the glorious dream of being able to embrace in one cast two such English artists as Sims Reeves and Santley as the representatives of Sir Kenneth and the Lion-hearted King respectively. How baseless was the vision thus fabricated we alone

who survive him can fully realize. In one instance, however, Balfe's previsions, or rather aspirations, as to the future representatives of the characters of his last work proved prophetic. He had during one of his last continental visits met with Madame, then Mdlle. Christine Nilsson, and had been struck with that associated charm of voice and person, and those dramatic qualities, which have since been fully appreciated by the world at large, and, strange to say, had composed the music allotted to his Edith with the Swedish prima donna in his mental vision. To a certain extent the forecast, as is often the case, was the cause of its own fulfilment. Mme. Nilsson, well aware of this flattering hope, determined it should be realized, and not a little to the loyalty with which she, this resolve once expressed, adhered to it till its fulfilment, is due that, in spite of all the difficulties naturally accumulating in the way of such an event, "Il Talismano," the Italian version of Balfe's last opera, saw the light at Her Majesty's Opera, Drury Lane, on the 11th of June, 1874, exactly four years within three months of the composer's death—a wonderfully short interval, counting the obstacles peculiar to the problem of a posthumous opera, written by an Englishman to be produced in England. Mr. Mapleson, the manager of Her Majesty's Opera, deserves no doubt the very

STATUE OF BALFE.

great credit of having undertaken to solve the difficult problem, it may be even said the still greater credit of having propounded it to himself, so to speak; but besides the natural hesitation accompanying such an important venture as the production of a new Italian opera in this country, there were the innumerable contingencies and accidents only known to an impressario to be met and overcome before an effective performance could be counted on. It was in assisting the enterprising English manager to the accomplishment of this end, by her firm adherence to her expressed intention, that Mme. Christine Nilsson rendered a service to the cause of native English talent which should never be forgotten. To Sir Michael Costa, by whom the score left by Balfe in a state not altogether of absolute completion was brought into shape for performance, with all the skill and careful regard for the composer's intention to be expected from such a master, and whose zeal and perseverance insured so perfect an execution of the opera, are owing in an almost equal degree the most sincere acknowledgments for his share in the happy result.

How piously faithful to the memory of their former and long-cherished favourite were the honest English public when the time came to appeal to them, even through the outlandish medium of the Italian

language and stage-practice, we all know, for their response enabled Mr. Mapleson to secure at the close of his season a succession of overflowing houses, and opened to him a prospect of a renewed harvest on the revival of Balfe's last opera, and this should be an encouragement to all whom it concerns, to conciliate the esteem and appreciation of a nation so staunch to those who seek its good graces on sufficient grounds.

The following carefully thought-out and judiciously appreciative analysis of the last work of Michael Balfe, by the hand of an accomplished critic, equally versed in technical knowledge, and possessed of the liberal yet nicely-fastidious taste without which such knowledge is rather an impediment than a help towards the formation of a just estimate, will, I doubt not, be read with the interest which the importance of the subject, and the skill and experience of the writer, claim in a like degree.*

Taking a purely technical view of Balfe's "swan-song," and measuring its calibre by the works which had been its immediate precursors, we can but think that supremacy should be accorded to "Il Talismano." There can be no possible doubt that the gift of melody—always one of Balfe's brightest characteris-

* It is to Mr. Desmond L. Ryan that I am indebted for this interesting and valuable contribution.—C. L. K.

tics—stood the musician in as good stead in his riper as in his earlier productions, and indeed he seemed to draw his inspiration at an ever-welling fount, a spring that was perennially fresh and sparkling; but the nature of musical art is ever and anon to take up fresh ground, either as to form or style of expression, and Balfe was one of those men who, while preserving their own individuality, are not insensible to change in the popular taste and the march of ideas. The teachings of the modern school of German composition evidently possessed a charm for, and exerted an influence over, Balfe's latest efforts; and without going to such an extreme as to include our own native master in the category of the Wagnerian devotees, there is some ground for the statement that the really distinctive points of the "futuristic" form of the lyric drama obtained an adherent, if not a votary, in Balfe. But the difference between the expositors of English and of German opera was immeasurable; one, full of natural resource, and teeming, Schubert-like, with inexhaustible melody; the other, striving beneath the cloak of clever contrivance to hide poverty of ideas and lack of spontaneous conception. That Balfe could ever become a Wagner was an impossibility only surpassed by the idea that Wagner could ever become another Balfe. In the opera of "Il Talismano" we find now and again

slight evidences of a tendency to carry out the Teutonic form; this, however, is never pushed to an extreme length, and there is no apparent attempt to constitute the homogeneity of the drama, as with Wagner, in the association of individual phrases with the prominent members of the dramatis personæ. What fruits therefore Balfe may have accumulated from his study of the music of the future, are purely summed up in unconventionality, freedom from restraint, and the desire to make the most of dramatic situations; but for the metaphysical elements of expression, or any example of those principles implying the abrogation of acknowledged musical rule, which characterize the works of the musical prophet, the student might search the score of "Il Talismano" in vain. Yet would such scrutiny be amply rewarded, as it would lead to the discovery that each character is sketched in bold outlines, and that the shading and colouring—to use technical terms—are laid on by a master-hand. There is to be found in "Il Talismano" that which, perhaps, is not to be discovered in any other of Balfe's works in so remarkable a degree—viz., perfect idealization of character. That principle of contrast which so greatly heightens the interest of the play is equally apparent in the musical illustration. The manly and chivalrous utterances of the Lion-hearted King show in

strong relief beside the tender sympathetic strains of the love-lorn Sir Kenneth; while the separate individuality of Queen Berengaria and Edith Plantagenet is even more strictly marked. The dwarf Nectabanus, again, gives evidence of Balfe's power of distinct portraiture. With characters clearly and definitely drawn like these, aiding in the development of a dramatic story abounding with strong situations and always easy of comprehension, an opera must inevitably become interesting and attractive, and combining as it does almost every other element conducive to success, the work must perforce become generally and universally popular.

Were prefixing the key in which operas commence and end customary, as in the case of orchestral works, "Il Talismano" might be described as an opera in A, the opening chorus being in the minor, and the finale in the major. Strictly speaking, there is no overture, the preludio which occupies its place being simply the anticipation of the prayer "Monarch Supreme," and air "On valiant Squires," sung by Richard in the second act. Unlike the general tenour of the writing throughout the opera, this preludio is remarkably sketchy, and the effects of instrumentation appear rather to be broadly hinted at than properly filled in. Opening with five bars of fanfare for the

cornets, the motivo of the prayer immediately commences on the strings in unison, accompanied simply and solely by a moving bass on the contrabassi, pizzicato, the key being that of A minor, a tone higher than that in which the prayer makes its subsequent appearance. The subject comes to a full close in the relative major, and a few bars of modulation lead to the introduction of the air, allegro marziale, in A major. The scoring is here very rich and full, the leading phrase being given out by the wood, wind, and violins in octaves, and the harmony being very admirably distributed. The second subject is allotted to the violins and horns, the bass preserving its restless character, and an additional feature being the syncopation of the middle part; next the original theme is resumed, with new effects of instrumentation, and the second phrase is announced with altered colouring, leading up to a grand tutti, in which the unstable nature of the bass gives place to a figure of crotchets in conjunction with triplets. A peroration of no great length, syncopated in form, leads to a half close on the dominant, preceding the resumption of the fanfare, the cornets being strengthened by the strings, and the preludio closing on the major tonic chord of it. The opening chorus, "Soldiers of Araby," is one of the most complete and

characteristic portions of the entire work. In scheme it is very extensive, and, as usual with Balfe, brings many changes of subject matter according to the changing tenour of the text. The first movement is in the initial minor, opening with a short orchestral introduction which does not contain any episodical matter, but is a direct foreshadowing of the choral subject. The basses give out the first strain and are answered by the tenors, the second half of the subject is then given out in concert, and a very fine effect is obtained upon the words "Smite ye the foe, spare the women and children," whereon a digression is made into the key of E major. The original theme then recurs, the tempo changing to moderato grandioso and the minor giving way to the major key at the passage "Ever keep faith," where the voices come in harmonized, and accompanied principally by the brass wind for sixteen bars, when the words "Soldiers of Araby, mark what the Koran sayeth" brings a recurrence of the opening strain brilliantly scored. The passage "Our master awaits us," is allotted to a solo bass voice, the time altering to three-four and the subject being announced in the key of C. The figure of accompaninent here is peculiar and striking, the liberal use of the sforzando giving a strongly-marked character to the rhythm. The chorus take up the

strain in unison—interrupting it however with the cry of "Tambourgi tambourgi," the Eastern equivalent for the French "Rataplan." The entire effect of this number is admirable, and the climax is thoroughly worthy of the illustrative force of the various sections into which it is divided. The harmony is throughout bright and bold, and the orchestral colouring is quite in keeping with the Oriental taste for variety and richness of tints. To a thoughtful or imaginative auditor the music would suggest, without a doubt, the very picture in which it it used as an adjunctive form of illustration, although it would scarcely be in keeping with the Arabs of Longfellow, who folded their tents and "silently stole away." At any rate, in abstract or detail, the chorus of Arabs is a worthy commencement of an excellent work, and the first of the thirty-one lyrical numbers which comprise the opera, is a most fitting harbinger of the qualities of those which are to succeed. No. 2 is simply a recitative between the Emir and Sir Kenneth, and in order that the force of the narrative might not lose in comparison with the means of its illustration, an unforced declamatory style of writing for the voice is adopted. One thing that can scarcely escape observation is the very free tonality—to make use of a modern expression—of the relatives, and a

good effect of colour is thus obtained without recourse being had to rhythmic forms. The third number brings a complete change in the duet between the Emir and the Scotch knight, and here we have the first truly Balfeian melody, sweet, luscious, and flowing. Still adhering to the key of A major, the duet is written in three-four measure, andantino-moderato, and after a two-bar phrase in the flute and oboe, commences with the tenor voice on the words "Golden love-locks floating." Having sung the praise of English beauty, Sir Kenneth resigns the song to the Emir, who in the same strain, a fourth lower, descants in glowing terms upon the loveliness of the Saracenic maidens; both voices are then united in a vigorous allegro-moderato "To each heaven its planets," containing some good points of progression and some effective harmonies. A new phrase for the bass voice now appears in F sharp minor, illustrating the words "Raven locks o'er clust'ring as iv'ry white," and modulating gently gives place to an andantino in D major led off by the tenor, the two voices being afterwards employed antiphonally. A resumption of the allegro-moderato in the original key leads up to a spirited peroration, fully accompanied in the orchestra, and the number is brought to a close with a somewhat lengthy

symphony, principally recalling the foregoing themes and diminishing in force down to the softest of pianissimos. With this number the first scene comes to a termination, and the action removes from the Desert to a corridor in the Chapel of Engaddi. Here Edith Plantagenet is discovered lost in maiden contemplation. It must be admitted that the introductory symphony in the orchestra is the embodiment of an abstract conception of a mystic or mysterious nature, and one whose meaning is not readily discovered. As an interlude bearing any definite interpretation, it will always furnish food for speculation, but so long as it is acceptable to the auditors, it is likely to remain so with the orchestral performers, notably the flute and clarionet, for whose display the florid passages are written. Here again a remarkable freedom of tonality is observable, and up to a few bars before the commencement of the recitative "How calm the air," it is difficult to state what relation the notation bears to the signature (E major). It will at once be seen that the music of Edith is written for a soprano voice of extensive compass and equality of timbre, the wide intervals in the vocal score being especially well calculated to display—if indeed they do not imperatively demand—those peculiarities of the organ. Further than this, it may be added that

the recitative is purely meditative and reflective, and that it certainly fails not to depict mental quietude and physical calm. A phrase for the violoncello leads up to the air "Solemnly, softly cometh the nightfall," a beautiful devout strain of melody in D major, twelve-eight time. Here we may allude again to the choice nature of the instrumentation, which is powerful and rich without being overlaid with useless efforts of contrivance. The modulations are pleasing and effective, and the flowing, easy nature of the melody is completely representative of the style of its composer. The distance between the intervals is here remarkable, in one instance the voice part going from B below the line to E in the fourth space of the treble clef; but no particular exactions are made upon the upper register of the voice. The prayer, all too brief (numbering but twenty-six bars in all), is interrupted by the entrance of a nun, who silently hands a letter to Edith and withdraws. The emotions of the Lady Plantagenet when she learns that her champion, Sir Kenneth, is the Prince's envoy to the cave of Engaddi, are disclosed in a series of passionate exclamations, in the form of recitative; a change to a movement allegro-moderato, while still preserving the narrative style, brings with it some very happy harmonic transitions, commencing in

F sharp minor upon the phrase, "Were he but simple knight," and leading with a brilliant cadenza to a half-close upon B flat, whence the subject of the prayer is resumed in E flat, a semitone higher than formerly. There are many material differences in the accompaniment, a free use of the clarionet in florid counterpoint being one of the most prominent features. Looking at the intrinsic merits of this prayer, it must be acknowledged to be a masterly conception, elaborated with consummate skill, and perfectly indicating the phase of emotional feeling which it is its purport to convey to the auditor. In the hands of a skilful artist an air such as this would at all times serve for the portrayal of those subtle traits of human sensibility such as it is only within the scope of the higher province of the art to depict. The very existence of such a number is sufficient to redeem the opera from the charge of mediocrity and to endow it with that prestige only to be gained by the fulfilment of the requirements of æsthetic principles. A strongly accentuated passage next announces the entrance of the dwarf Nectabanus, who tells Edith in a recitative that the envoy of the Princes has arrived. This leads to an outburst of joy from the happy recipient of the news, in a passionate allegro in E major, "My fond thought by day," a movement answering to the cabaletta in the

scena of Italian opera. Of this it is sufficient to say that it is a masterly example of that style of love-fraught music in which Balfe always excelled; that it is a pure exhibition of a joy so great that it almost becomes delirious—a tonal representation of a heart wildly beating with a delight that finally merges into rapture. Technical details would be out of place in reference to a composition in which the end, once attained, would justify any means; but it is as well to call attention to the manner in which the fullest effects of the voice are obtained without any apparent effort. The demands made upon the vocalist are none of the slightest, it is true, but the effect of the upper B natural is marvellous. A résumé of the chief subject forms the material of the concluding symphony. In great contrast to the foregoing comes the recitative, "Now do I see" (No. 5), and air, "I love the sky" (No. 6), for Nectabanus. The dwarf, misshapen in form, is equally deformed in mind, and his description of the manner in which his nature runs counter to the proclivities of his fellow-mortals has given the composer a fine opportunity for the exercise of his talents. Rugged, fierce and wild is the strain to which Nectabanus gives voice, and the technical treatment of the subject is as fragmentary and disjointed as the dwarf's own figure. The air (No. 6)

commences with a loud burst in the orchestra in D minor, six-eight time, the voice part changing the measure to two-four at the phrase, "I love the storm," given out in the first measure, but in the minor key; an arioso appears likely to occupy the place of the previous declamatory passages, but this is purely transient, and the original strangely contrasting rhythms again come uppermost, the song finishing with a coda of great power, fraught, if possible, with even more fell significance than the rest. The manner in which advantage has been taken of the nature of the story to present typical forms of character has been already described in brief; the principle holds good whether we regard it in abstract or detail. If the malevolent soliloquy and evil-minded aria of Nectabanus are in direct opposition to the fervent joy-song of Edith, the number which succeeds has points of difference from them all. The scene changes to the interior of the chapel, and a procession of nuns enters, with boys swinging censers, the organ pealing forth, and nothing lacking to give effect to the due representation of a religious ceremony *pur et simple.* How the dramatic action is here carried on, the reader is already aware. Musically speaking, the "Salve Regina" (No. 7) is not amongst the strongest numbers of the opera. While nothing is wanting to

render the whole scene imposing and impressive, the style of the music is too ecclesiastically severe to suit the atmosphere of an opera house, yet would it doubtless be considered too lax to suit the cathedral service. Considering the luxurious nature of the surroundings, the magnificence of the appointments of the chapel, and the perfectly pictorial effect of the mise en scène, it is to be doubted whether it would not have been wiser to have founded the "Salve Regina" more upon the school of the Rossinian mass, than upon the more ancient and solid forms of church music. These remarks are not, however, intended to detract from the merits of what must at any rate be considered an admirable piece of technical workmanship. Balfe knew his business too well to finish up any section of his work with an anticlimax, and the "Salve Regina" concludes admirably and effectively. The strain for the organ—a Spohrish theme of fifteen bars—is worthy of notice, and the manner in which it is reintroduced upon the termination of the "Salve" is felicitous in the extreme. The Queen, Edith, and Sir Kenneth have all been present at this service; as the religious procession slowly files out, Edith, with a gesture full of meaning, lets fall a rose—a love token, we take it, for Sir Kenneth. When the lady fair has passed from his gaze the amorous knight apostrophizes

the bud in no measured terms. This number (No. 8), forming the finale to the first act, comprises the recitative, "No sweeter bud," and aria, "Flow'ret I kiss thee," the latter an air destined to become a favourite throughout the length and breadth of the land. Five bars of recitative lead to a charming motivo, "Largo assai," in F, six-eight, on the words, "The amorous kiss-laden breeze," rendered doubly fascinating inasmuch as it is discontinued ere expectation is satisfied. A few episodical phrases bring us to the key of D flat, after some "tall" writing for the tenor voice, and the symphony of the ballad commences with a charming feature in the employment of the harp at the half-beat of the bar. Of the ballad, in saying that it is one of the composer's happiest inspirations, the duty of this chronicle is fulfilled, but it is impossible to leave the theme without descanting upon the rare sympathetic quality of the air and the delicious character of the instrumentation in the orchestral accompaniment. The bold transition into C major should not be lost sight of. As in the other vocal numbers an excellent climax is attained in this song, and as the knight, kneeling devoutly, presses the rose to his lips, the deep tones of the organs are heard pealing forth their holy strains, and thus the first act is brought to a close.

Although the opera was designed by the librettist

to be divided into three acts, it was deemed expedient upon the production of the work at Her Majesty's Opera, to separate the original second act into two portions. There is no cause to question the soundness of judgment which prompted the alteration, and the precedent thus early established, will no doubt be hereafter adhered to. The second act opens with a somewhat extended symphony in D minor three-four time, the most prominent features in which are the trumpet-call and the steady rhythms of the bass, thoroughly martial in spirit. Some episodical matter leads to a close in F sharp, and ushers in the recitative for baritone (Richard), "O Sun of my existence." With the details of this soliloquy there is little necessity to deal, enough to state that the tenderness of the King's nature and his fond expectation of once more being united to his Queen, are here most skilfully and subtly illustrated.

The recitative, prefaces and aria (No. 9), in A flat major, triple time, the opening phrase of which suggests in some slight degree a reminiscence of Donizetti, the air—"O who shall sing the rapture"—is eminently tuneful, and is most skilfully written for the fullest and most effective portion of the baritone register. Here too, the power of continuity which Balfe so obviously possessed is most indubitably

asserted. However much the opening phrase might resemble the commencement of the trio in "Lucrezia Borgia," the development and amplification of the subject belongs to Balfe alone, and those features are quite sufficient to redeem the air from the charge of being deficient in originality. There is no piece-meal work about this song—no little interrupted snatches of melody which fade away before they have time to impress themselves upon the memory, but the conception is spontaneous and homogeneous, preserving some strain of chivalrous sentiment throughout. The very striking chromatic progression in the working out will not escape observation, nor will the nature of the orchestral accompaniments, at first used antiphonally in simple groups of quavers, but subsequently employed in semiquaver form in support of the voice, be overlooked. The orchestra comes to a close in the dominant, and the cadence is given out by the voice unaccompanied, the number ending with a few bars simply harmonized for the instruments. No. 10 comprises a scena and terzetto for two tenors and baritone, written in a highly dramatic vein throughout. The contrast between the characters of Cœur de Lion and Sir Kenneth is here most boldly depicted. The recitative for the most part is accompanied by sustained notes only; but any peculiar

shade of emotion—such as is conveyed by the words "Heavens! have mine eyes declared my love," spoken in an "aside" by the knight when warned by the king not to be too aspiring—is illustrated by the employment of an appropriate figure in the accompaniment. A very pleasing effect is produced by the introduction of the strain, previously given to the organ in the chapel scene, in the orchestra as the accompaniment to Sir Kenneth's utterances, what time his thoughts revert to the idol of his heart. The theme comes back to its old key (F major), and the scoring is particularly delicate and refined. As this dies away a fanfare of trumpets behind the scenes ushers in an agitated movement, allegro-moderato, in which De Vaux relates the insult offered to the English flag by Leopold of Austria. The turbulence and disquietude of this episode are enhanced by the peculiar triplet-figure given out in octaves by the instruments. The tempo now changes to allegro vivace assai, quasi presto, three-four, in C major, the principal theme being given out by the baritone solo, and then with the tenors in harmony above; the character of the trio "To the mount" is fierce and turbulent, and, as in the majority of the different sections of the opera, is worked up to a fine climax, a résumé of the material previously employed forming

an effective symphony with which to terminate the scene. No. 7, the scene of St. George's Mount, is a concerted morceau in C, twelve-eight, beginning with the familiar trumpet-call, and immediately ushering in the chorus of English, French, and Austrian soldiers and a separate choir of eight pages, "Draw your swords." Here breadth of effect is aimed at rather than elaboration of detail. Next follows the stern interrogatory of the Lion Heart, "Who hath done this?" alluding to the planting of the Austrian flag on the coign of 'vantage beside the English standard. "'Twas I, Duke Leopold of Austria," is the curt rejoinder. A motivo in A minor, allegro vivace, "To the winds," illustrates the fury of Richard, as he uproots the banner, snaps the staff in twain and tramples it underfoot. The intercession of the King of France is given out in ordinary recitative; but upon the Lion Heart's command to Sir Kenneth to don his armour and return to guard the flag of England, an ariso character is given to the phrase, "And see thou guard it as thou wouldst the fame of thine own Ladye Love." The signature now changes to D, tempo moderato, ushering in a short declaratory subject for the bass voice (King of France), freely coloured and strongly accentuated by the orchestral accompaniment, which seems to breathe a spirit of

fierce contention. A tributary phrase in the minor, expressing Richard's wish to be reconciled to Austria, leads up with a maestoso movement to the chorus "Lead us on, Lion Heart," a forcible and warlike strain, given out principally by the chorus and orchestra in unison, in C; this comes to a close in the dominant chord, and some telling modulations, between the brass, wind, and strings alternately accompany Richard's command, "Spread the proud folds of England's royal banner," and ushers in a maestoso twelve-eight; the most prominent portion is given to the baritone voice, relieved by the brief outcries of the soldiers, "To arms." The tonality here is again very free, and the key of B flat being reached without much harmonic preparation the prayer, "Monarch Supreme" (No. 12), for baritone immediately commences. The material of this section of the work forms the foundation of the preludio, to which allusion has already been made. The accompaniment consists of the strings in unison with the voice, with a plain counterpoint, or moving bass, allotted to the lower strings, sempre staccato, and recalling in effect if not in design the andante connoto of the Italian Symphony of Mendelssohn. The plan of the preludio is followed in detail, saving that the entire number now appears a semitone higher

than formerly. The fine exhortation in G major, "On, Valiant Squires," fully accompanied, is admirably distributed between the solo voice and chorus, and is one of the most stirring numbers of the opera, almost every possible effect being produced by the able combination of voices and instruments. A reprise of the first strain of the martial movement furnishes material for the symphony, the bass figures being varied in the manner already described in the introductory prelude. No. 13, a recitative and aria for tenor, Sir Kenneth, possesses a peculiarity apart from any other portion of the opera; the opening recitative "Watch thou our banner," being prefaced and accompanied by a single viola, or tenor, as the instrument is more usually termed. The result of this combination is novel to modern ears; but decidedly the effect of the contemplative meditation of the knight, keeping his weary vigil, is enhanced by the simplicity of the means employed. The recitative is restless in nature, commencing in B flat and ending in B natural, in which key the succeeding ballad, "On balmy wing of night breeze," is laid. For tenderness of expression, and delicacy of harmonies, this air is a worthy rival to the more ad captandum "Rose-song," and there will not be wanting people who will give the preference to the former, both upon

the score of artistic workmanship and intrinsic melodic charm. Although "On balmy wing" is ostensibly in the major key, the opening phrase is remarkable for the use of minor harmonies, which seem to endow the strain with some of that mystic tenderness and quiet pathos with which the musical lore of the sister isle is so abundantly fraught. In the two verses the instrumentation is most agreeably diversified, the accompaniment in the first instance being given to the strings, legato, and in the second being allotted to the wood-wind, sostenuto, with a pizzicato bass, pianissimo. The choice harmonies of the reprise of the first subject, and the peroration allotted to the flutes and clarionet, will not escape notice. The fourteenth number again affords the composer opportunity for the exercise of his power of tone-painting, illustrating as it does the scene between Sir Kenneth and Nectabanus, in which the omnipotent power of love is used to beguile the knight from his post of honour. As, however, this number is remarkably comprehensive, containing no fewer than 283 bars, the particulars must be condensed, lest their full consideration become tiresome and tedious.

In whatever scene Balfe had to portray many shades of passion, or many phases of emotion, his

inventive powers never failed of material to portray them all; hence in the present number, wherein a host of conflicting elements have to be depicted, the music becomes fragmentary from the force of circumstances. It is only necessary to particularize that when the Lady Edith arises in the thoughts of the amorous Scot, their utterance is accompanied by the theme of the Rose-song, used in like manner to the organ music, to conjure up the old associations connected with it; that Nectabanus has a good rhythmical aria in three-eight time, "Ho, ho, rare sport," alternating with a subject given to the tenor, in three-four, E flat major, "Be still, my heart," decidedly martial in character, and accompanied brightly but not heavily in the bass. Of these materials, woven together with some episodical matter, the number is comprised. The working out is full of technical points of skilful writing, and a most telling climax is attained, the number finishing in E flat, with an instrumental subject obtained from Nectabanus arioso. This was the close of the second act, according to Sir Michael Costa's method of representation. The scene now changes to the Queen's Pavilion, when a reflective number is introduced in the shape of a chorus for female voices, "Hours and hours roll slowly on" (No. 15). The melody is pleasing, and

the voice parts full of excellent contrivance, the number being of that description calculated to catch the popular ear. A brief recitative, "Give me my harp," leads to a quaint old-fashioned Navarrese ballad, "Beneath a portal trained with ivy leaves," for soprano (Berengaria), the sixteenth number of the score. The praises of this delightful vocal morceau have been sung wherever the opera has been heard, and most musical amateurs are already familiar with the ballad. This is perhaps one of the most characteristic items in the whole opera, a work which, by the way, exhibits the versatility of the composer in a very marked degree; and as a pure specimen of characteristic colour in music, the Navarrese song may take place beside the opening chorus of Arabs. The words are appropriate, the ditty piquant, and the scoring felicitous in the extreme. The effect of the horns, used simply in the bass on the tonic and dominant, is remarkably good, and the harmonies are ably distributed amongst the instruments. The romance, as it is termed, is in F major, three-four measure; the tempo, allegro giusto; the first strain is given out in F, the first section of the second subject being announced in D minor, and the second portion in F sharp major, modulating into A major, where it comes to a full close. The first theme is

immediately resumed, with a little subsidiary matter to heighten the effect of the climax. In the third verse the female chorus repeat the "burden" of the verse, and the cadence for the solo voice is varied, so as to reach C in alto. The Queen's song is followed by a short dialogue, in recitative between Berengaria and Edith, leading to No. 17 proper, the romance of the Lady Eveline allotted to the soprano (Edith). This is another charming morceau, well worthy to represent our native composer at his best, and to be ranked amongst his most complete triumphs. The story related in the romance is that of a hapless maiden, whose lover, summoned to the wars, dies on the battlefield, while the maid pines away and droops until she too is summoned away to rest. Every shade of feeling is beautifully illustrated in the song, the opening subject, "Like some fair flower," in E flat major, being accompanied by an orchestral figure of very peculiar and persistent rhythm. The middle part is freely modulated, and the return to the original key is charmingly contrived. A few intermediary bars prepare us for the subject in the relative minor, Larghetto, six-eight, upon the phrase "Still are the harps in the halls of her fathers," which is eight bars long; this gives way for a new theme in the tonic major (C) in the words "Softly she sighs,"

announced pianissimo, and supported by a pedal bass. The subject in C minor then recurs, and after four bars makes way for an adagio in the initial major (E flat) in common time, "Gently she faded," the major portion of which is repeated in chorus, and in duet form by Berengaria and Edith. The scoring of this number is throughout of the utmost refinement and delicacy, the corno inglese being used in the last section of the scena with great taste and effect. No. 18, "Cousin Edith," is one of the narrative portions of the opera, immediately assisting the dramatic action; as the major portion is in recitation, there is no very great necessity to follow it note by note. Enough to state that here Edith is apprised of the ruse by which Sir Kenneth was lured from his post, and learns from Nectabanus that the knight is outside her tent. The ensuing duet between Sir Kenneth and Edith is one of the portions of the work which have already acquired popularity apart from the opera. The number (19) commences with a short prefatory symphony in C, allegro agitato, ushering in Edith's recitative, "To thy post, oh valiant knight." The movement speedily changes to six-eight measure, moderato, in the tonic minor, at the phrase given to the knight, "I have heard that I'm deeply dishonoured;" the musical phrase being forcibly

dramatic. After some episodical matter the soprano takes up the strain, which comes to a close in the relative major (E flat.) Eight bars of recitative now lead into a cantabile movement for the tenor, in E flat, major, "Give me bliss in my hour of despair," richly accompanied in the orchestra. Some dialogue next prepares the way for a Larghetto, three-four, in A flat, major, "Keep the ring," led off by the soprano with some florid passages, interspersed with sustaining notes; the second half of the strain is given by the tenor, and the first subject is then resumed in concert, the voices being skilfully used, some very clever points of imitation being discernible. When this has been fully developed, a transition is made into the key of C, and a martial subject, allegro grandioso is announced by the trumpets and drums. The soprano takes the initiative, closely followed by the tenor, both singing the same words, "list to the voice of honour;" the music being fresh, bright, and inspiriting, while the orchestration, extraordinarily full and copious, is rich and colourable to a degree. Allusion may be specially made to the manner in which the harps are employed, as well as to the notable effect obtained by the use of the cymbals pianissimo. This admirable, and in many respects grand, duet finishes up with a twelve-bar symphony

formed of the foregoing materials. No. 20 is a dramatic dialogue between Richard, Sir Kenneth, and De Vaux (tenor), while the king learns how the knight has broken his trust, and immediately proceeds to an act of summary vengeance, but is deterred by the intervention of Edith. Here follows No. 21, "Thy kinswoman, Edith," a concerted piece for sextet and chorus, in E major, nine-eight. The principal phrase is given out by the soprano (Edith), accompanied by the bass instruments in free canon, and richly harmonized; Berengaria then repeats the theme, in canon with Richard, the harmony being distributed between Edith, De Vaux, and Nectabanus. A tributary in the tonic major is then announced by soloists and chorus (soprani, contralti, tenori primi, tenore secondo, bassi primi è secondo), the latter giving out the martial subject from the duet between Sir Kenneth and Nectabanus (originally written in three-four measure), in plain harmony, against the episodical strain, contrapuntally treated by the solo sextet. This leads to a resumption of the first theme, sung by all the voices in unison, the chorus being answered by the solo voices; a new peroration is given, and coming to a half close in the dominant, a short coda of six bars in common time, allegro, bringing the whole to a termination, "*fff.*" The scoring through-

out this number is extraordinarily full, and the bass instruments being for the most part in unison with the voices to which the subject is allotted, a vast amount of power and sonority is obtained. No. 22 brings the explanation of the manner in which Sir Kenneth was made to desert his honourable watch in a movement allegro con fuoco. The prayers of Edith and Berengaria are successful, and the knight's life is spared—on the condition that he never more float his pennon in Christian camp. This leads immediately into No. 23, "Farewell, my beloved Edith," the finale to the second act proper, with solo for tenor. The movement is an allegro, in A minor, common time, and is treated in a manner similar to the preceding concerted morceau (No. 21), the solo voices (Edith, Berengaria, and Richard) immediately taking up the strain, which, after some intermediary working out, is given to the chorus. A change to the major brings with it a new subject, given out with the full power of orchestra, chorus, and soloists, an allusion to the first theme being made in the conclusory orchestral symphony, which ends the second act. The admirable contrivance and technical knowledge displayed in the writing of the concerted music, can hardly escape the most untechnical reader.

The twenty-third number of the opera, a dialogue

between Edith, Berengaria, and Richard, in which the former intercedes again for the fallen knight, is paid little attention to in the practical representation of the opera. Still, regarding it as a component part of the work, we need only say that it is well worked out, the dramatic points are well represented, and the recitative lacks neither colour nor variety. A full close is made in E major, whence the transition to No. 23, "Farewell, my beloved Edith" in A minor, is easy. This number is pre-eminently Balfeish—that is to say, that symmetry of structure is not so much regarded as melodic phrasing and harmonious combinations. The motif is purely original, and the agitation and perturbation which it may be supposed to indicate, are rendered prevalent throughout. An effective change is soon made to the tonic major where the whole vocal forces, solo and choral, are employed in singing the praises of the King. With a happy allusion to the first subject given out in unison by the instruments, the act comes to an impressive termination.

The third act of Balfe's scene—the fourth according to the first public representation of the work—is, musically speaking, the most important of the whole. It was not to be doubted that the composer would grasp the situations and illustrate them thoroughly

well, had he leisure to bestow upon his task; but, from incidental particulars, it appears that Balfe's labour at this final section of his last lyric drama was but desultory, and that upon his regretted demise the whole act was not properly wrought out. Be that as it may, it savours in no wise of incompleteness; and taking into consideration the poor dramatic incidents with which the musician had to deal, is rather entitled to be called well-proportioned and fully illustrated. The act is prefaced by an entr'acte of some length (No. 24), having for its motivo the subject of Richard's song, "Oh! who shall sing the rapture" (in F instead of A flat major), scored for the violoncellos in the leading subject and prettily relieved by an elegant demisemiquaver figure for the violins above; this leads to a recitative in which the King speaks of his intention of returning to England—Prince John having laid claim to his throne. The facts of Sir Kenneth having proved his rescuer from danger, and the banished knight's presence in the camp, disguised, are also made known in this accompanied recitative. In this scene too the King has audience of De Vaux, and bids him bring the erst recalcitrant knight again before him. This leads to the terzetto (No. 25), "Why, Sweetheart," andante maestoso in G major, three-four time, between

Richard, Edith, and Berengaria. The subject is a homely and thoroughly English one, but the voice parts are rendered characteristic and distinct with a rare skill, and the differing emotions of the three singers are most admirably portrayed in the music. This trio, simple and solid as it is, may lay claim to be considered amongst the best written and best imagined items in the opera. The trio comes to a full close in the tonic (G) and the Grand March (No. 26) immediately enters, without preparation, in A major—a lively martial strain, admirably fitted to illustrate the concluding episode in the dramatic action. The March consists of two themes, the first having a marked and forcible accent, the second being a suave and flowing melody. The amplifications of the two subjects are scarcely worth mentioning, though they suffice to ably unite the separate portions into a coherent whole. The second subject of the March is a capital rhythmic melody, and use is made of it hereafter, as will be seen. No. 27 is a Part Song, "A Song to Merrie England," in A major, six-eight time—which relies, as a composition, as much upon its enforced and natural style as upon any intrinsic qualities of workmanship or erudition. "A Song to Merrie England" is far removed from commonplace; its sentiments are sound and its spirit

unquestionable; there is no attempt to render it a work of erudition, but rather to make it a national and popular song. This can never fail to be a favourite morceau, since its expression is so frank and its feeling so warm and hearty. A few bars of chorus in F major (No. 28), "Long live King Richard," lead to a recitative for the baritone (Richard) in which the King bids De Vaux tell the minstrel-knight appear and sing before the royal presence. The recitative comes to a half-close upon the subdominant of F (C), and the theme of the "Rose Song" is immediately announced in the original key D flat (No. 29). The tenor is heard singing outside the royal tent, and a dramatic part is here written against the subject for the soprano (Edith), who takes up the motivo when the first phrase is concluded. Next follow some effective bits of concerted music for the two voices, richly accompanied and strikingly harmonized, the morceau ending with an imitative phrase in the contra-bassos. Recitative here ensues, Richard announcing the true rank and nobility of the supposed traitor Sir Kenneth, or rather the Prince of Scotland, and the chorus, at first anxious to wreak their vengeance upon the knight, eventually join in his praises with that stage unanimity which Puff described as being "wonderful." Now

follows the soprano rondo, "Radiant Splendours," (No. 30), allegro brillante in D major, common time, transposed, however, by Mdlle. Nilsson into another situation, during the representation of the opera. Eight bars of prelude prepare the way for the entrance of the solo voice in a movement as sparkling and light as it is melodious and fanciful. The accompaniment may be dismissed as a mere support to the voice without any individual peculiarity of form or treatment, but the felicitous combination of instruments employed in the score must not escape notice. The rondo is excessively difficult and exacting for the singer (Mdlle. Nilsson finished up in D in alt.), and constructed in a great measure upon those florid lines which Balfe the singer, no less than Balfe the composer, was so attached to. It is to be doubted whether any ostensible show-piece has ever been more happily conceived or felicitously worked-out; and though the display of erudition in "Radiant Splendours" may not claim for it a place amongst the masterpieces of florid song, its innate grace and remarkable brilliancy must ever cause it to be regarded with feelings of admiration. The finale (No. 31) is but a reproduction of the March, ushered in by a few bars' recitative for the baritone (Richard). The theme of the

March is given out by the full orchestra in gorgeous score (if we may use the expression), and the second subject is declaimed by the chorus. The solo voices announce a brief subsidiary theme, after which the coda, by no means a prolonged one, brings the chorus, and with it the opera, to a triumphant finish.

Looking at "Il Talismano" from the stand-point of pure art, it will be found, perhaps, to depend upon its intrinsic fund of pure wholesome melody and the naïveté rather than power of expression, more than on scholarly writing or originality of construction. The time, however, is perhaps not ripe for a just estimate of Balfe's posthumous work to be made; we have leanings towards the man, as well as for or against the musician, which it must take a long course of years to neutralize. But it will be generally admitted and conceded that "Il Talismano," albeit a departure from his accepted school of composition, was one of Balfe's happiest and soundest efforts; and the form, artistically speaking, is as much superior to his earlier efforts in Ballad Opera as Beethoven's "Eroica" symphony is an advance upon his first. Balfe did not live to see his best ideas realized; but the very existence of "Il Talismano" proves that he was not only a man who moved with the times, but that he had the apt discrimination to choose between the salutary

and meretricious qualities of the modern school of music. "Il Talismano," in the abstract, was but an experiment in a new field of lyric composition; as such it not only enlists our sympathies, but commands our admiration. The opera is a wholesome and forcible dramatic work, and the latent power which it reveals renders our respect the stronger, and our sorrow the more poignant that its gifted composer was not spared us to make still greater efforts in the same direction.

BALFE'S STATUE IN DRURY LANE THEATRE.

ON the return of Balfe's old friend and fellow-countryman, Dion Boucicault, from America, in 1872, a movement was set on foot by him with a view of having some memorial of the great and popular English composer placed in Westminster Abbey, and a testimonial was drawn up and respectfully forwarded to Dean Stanley with the appended signatures of a long array of prominent and influential men, whether of high social rank or professional eminence. The answer was that there was "no room" at present in this recognised but somewhat closely guarded Temple of Fame for our British worthies, but a hope was held out of future arrangements affording the required accommodation. This was probably regarded as what the French call *eau bénite de cour*, or a dilatory plea in lieu of a flat refusal, for which it might be a difficult task to find tenable grounds. Accordingly,

another movement was inaugurated by the popular dramatist, with a view to honouring in due fashion the memory of his deceased friend, as the representative of the English Lyrical Drama. This time the project took the form of a statue to be erected in some suitable spot. A committee of subscribers was formed, in which Mr. Thomas Chappell, the head of the well-known firm in Bond Street, with characteristic liberality of purse and spirit, took an important and active part, and a sufficient sum was soon raised to carry out the intended object. The sculptor selected to execute the statue was a Belgian artist, M. Mallempré, who had already attracted attention in this country by his works, and had been patronized by the late Prince Consort. In a year or so the work was completed, and the only remaining question was its locus standi. After some coquetting with the Albert Hall, the Testimonial Committee applied to the powers directing Drury Lane Theatre, and obtained the sanction of the committee of proprietors, and the permission of the manager, Mr. F. B. Chatterton, to have the statue of Balfe placed in the entrance hall of Drury Lane Theatre, by the side of David Garrick, Edmund Kean, and William Shakspeare. A more honourable, or a more appropriate site could not have been selected for the effigy of

England's most popular operatic composer, whose earliest strains, and the last premeditated utterance of his melodious genius had equally resouuded in the theatre which is the last remaining monument of England's theatrical glories.

The interesting ceremony of unveiling the statue of Balfe took place on Friday, the 25th of September, 1874, in the presence of an assembly numbering most of the chief musical and theatrical celebrities, together with many leading representatives of literature and art whose names it would be too long to write at large. Mr. C. L. Gruneisen, as spokesman of the Testimonial Committee, occupied the chair and presided over the uplifting of the veil, which was practically effected, amidst much cheering, by the hand of Sir Michael Costa, whose mouth, however, remained modestly closed, for indeed the chairman had exhausted, by a careful and comprehensive sketch of Balfe's career, the subject under present consideration.

That there was anything of a minor or second-rate character in the posthumous honour thus awarded to Balfe was not owing to the want of zeal or devoted admiration in the promoters, but to the peculiar system (if anything that works so mysteriously, and as it were haphazard can be so called) by which in this country such adjudications of outward honour and

respect are regulated. Balfe himself would no doubt have been abundantly satisfied had he foreknown the placing of his statue in its present position among the worshipped patriarchs of the dramatist's and the actor's art, and those who attended this ceremonial were doubtless well content to see him forming one of such a group of worthies as they beheld encircling in due order the vestibule of Old Drury :—

> Quin etiam veterum effigies ex ordine avorum,
> . . . . . .
> Vestibulo astabant.

THE END.

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